

# Man and His God

PRESCOTT F. JERNEGAN



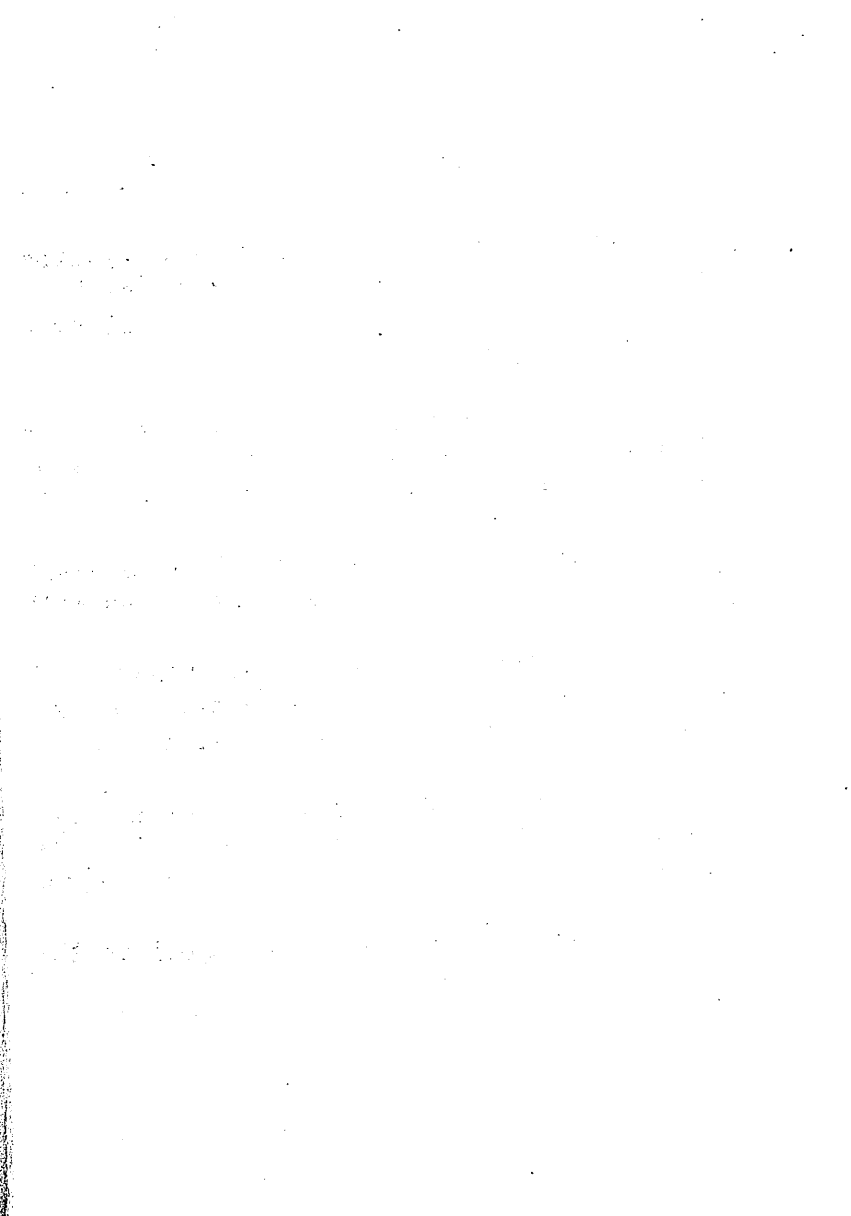
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*Prescott F. Jernegan*



Man And His God is an extremely and "religion." It is not a "treatise, literature. It was read in manuscript comments follow:

Doctor David Starr Jordan: "Interesting and epigrammatic style.....th  
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Professor James H. Leuba, Bryn M  
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Thomas A. Edison: "I was glad of  
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liberal interpretation of the meaning of "GOD"  
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by a number of eminent thinkers, some of whose

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e book is very sound. In fact I have no criti-  
t fail to be very successful."

awr College: "It will certainly make people  
with striking and happy imagery."

: "A sturdy, honest, well-considered piece of think-  
your writing and a degree of 'punch' which should  
many readers."

"It well warrants publication.....it is well,  
I see no logical or intellectual way of disprov-  
tten a book admirable in spirit and temper."

the opportunity to read it; I have no criticisms



# Man and His God

by

Prescott F. Jernegan

*Isuen 3-*

"God alone is permanently interesting."

—JOSEPH FORT NEWTON.

\* \* \* \*

"No good man is without a God."

—SENECA.

\* \* \* \*

"To know that you know what you know and that you do not know what you do not know—this is true knowledge."

—CONFUCIUS.

**Price--\$1.75 at Bookstores**

*From the Author*

**Mayfield, Palo Alto, Calif.**

**\$1.25 postpaid C.O.D.-\$1.35**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Above all: To Elizabeth, my wife, for her unfailing inspiration.

To Professor James H. Leuba, of Bryn Mawr College, for his painstaking criticism of the manuscript of this book.

To Professor W. E. Hocking, of Harvard University; Professor John Dewey, of Columbia University; Mr. Thomas A. Edison, and Mr. Philip H. Stevens, for a like service.

To Doctor David Starr Jordan, Chancellor Emeritus of Stanford University, for his unwearying encouragement.

## FOREWORD

This book is written for those who dare to risk their souls in the brave adventure of thinking for themselves. No doubt is evaded; *all* the difficulties are faced. To think is not to answer before one has read, nor to despise what one does not understand. To think is to ponder without prejudice; "I can't see it" often means "I won't weigh it."

"God" is the best known name in human history. Everybody has some opinion, positive or negative, about God. Yet comparatively few books are written about God, and few people read them. Oceans of books about religions, sects, and prophets of God! Millions of people who think they know all that may be known about God, or that nothing can be known! "Notwithstanding the fact that your book is one of the most interesting that has come to my desk, I do not believe I could sell it," wrote a prominent publisher.

Why? "The minds of most people, especially of children, may be compared to a vacant chair waiting for someone to fill it." The chairs are filled in childhood with a traditional idea of God; once emptied, they are seldom refilled. People think their idea of God is God; hence agnosticism or atheism when they lose it.

God is the profoundest of all ideas, the root of all our thinking. Other profound ideas we study; the idea of God we take ready-made, or reject offhand.

God is a difficult subject, and thinking is unpopular. Yet the first person to read the manuscript of this book was an Arizona Indian with little education and faulty English. Wise savage that he was, he absorbed what he could, copied down what he liked, and did not worry about what he did not understand. A potter by trade, he knew that only the plastic clay can take on gracious and useful forms. At forty-five his brain was still receptive; custom and creeds had not frozen his categories; education had not swamped his intelligence.

A book of this sort, if worth reading, should be read three times by most readers; once, attentively, to see what it says; again, reflectively, to learn what it means; finally, critically, to note what is worth accepting.

No doubt, my point of view is personal, independent. I represent no sect and swear by no school of philosophy. Nevertheless many eminent thinkers have expressed similar opinions. I have perhaps indicated my debt to them sufficiently in the text.

Where I am in doubt I say so, without pretending a certainty I do not feel; where I am certain I speak with an assurance not meant to be intolerant. I am not consumed with the prevalent itch that others should think of God exactly as I do; they could not in any case. Words never quite convey feeling, and thought is half feeling.

"Your book will certainly make people think," wrote a psychologist. A philosopher predicts that it "will be useful and helpful to many readers." I hope

they are right; for this is my desire, not conformity to my views, but the fellowship of free spirits in the perennial search for God.

He who writes of God points to an unexplored continent; the narrow strip of knowledge he can gain of its interminable coast serves only to deepen the mystery of its vast hinterland. Be it so; it is still worth while to catch a glimpse of that inaccessible Summit that rises cloud wrapped from the centre of the Universe.

The goal is one for all who seek to find God. I am hostile to no man's aspiration for God and contemptuous of no man's inability to discover Him by the path I follow. If I criticize creeds, I respect religion. I have followed a wise man's advice, who urged me "not to try to say everything about God." This book is not a theology; there is no science of God. It is not a theodicy; God needs no apology. I offer a view of God and religion in which neither the heart nor the intellect abdicates its rights. If it does not agree with the orthodox idea of God and religion, it perhaps presents a better faith.

*Frederic V. J. J. J.*  
*Honolulu, July 21, 1927*

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*"Reason mocks at majorities"*—A. N. WHITEHEAD.

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## A PARABLE

After many aeons Man appeared on the Earth. How he knew not; and Man called Change Progress, and the How he called God; for speech was his comforter. And it came to pass that Man wove himself a Noose of Words and bowed his head, worshipping his fictions. Thus arose churches, creeds and persecutions upon the Earth; for oftentimes Man slew man because he would not bow down to the gods.

Now after much time there appeared Reason, who taught Man the wiles of words and spake: "Cast away the Noose of Words that it strangle thee not. Behold the Doctrine of Symbolism, which illumineth all things. Then sang Reason and Man the hymn 1927, "Glory to God in the Highest; for Man is the Master of Words."

—Adapted from THE MEANING OF MEANING.

\* \* \* \*

*"Our orthodox theology on the one hand and our commonplace materialism on the other side vanish like ghosts before the light of free sceptical inquiry."*—

F. H. BRADLEY.

# MAN AND HIS GOD

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## CHAPTER I.

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### WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY GOD?

*"God is a blank sheet upon which nothing is found but what you have yourself written."*

MARTIN LUTHER.

The question, "Do you believe in God?" usually evokes a puzzled, if not embarrassed, look, with some such reply as, "Why, of course; or, "Of course not; or, "What do you mean by God?" Here are a few actual answers to this question:

"I believe in the God of the Bible."

"No; no sensible person believes in God."

"God? God is the playground of the human mind."

"Sometimes I do; sometimes I don't."

"I don't believe in any kind of God."

"Sure; you've got to have an hypothesis of some sort to account for the world."

"No; ideas of God are all guess work."

"Yes, even if there is no God, it is a comfort to believe there is one."

Further inquiry usually develops abrupt efforts to change the subject. Such contacts remind me of a visit to a Jesuit college in Manila. The teacher of physics was asked if the students were ever allowed to

experiment with the instruments in the glass cases. Holding up his hands in holy horror, the good father replied, "Why, of course not; they might break them."

A fear of this sort, one suspects, haunts the believer who is asked to bring his idea of God into the light of controversy. In the process of dusting it off it might suffer a sea-change; like an uncorked vial of perfume, its aroma might vanish. The word "God" is as flexible as rubber, as elusive as an electron, and as indefinite as the "Devil." Everyone means something by "God," but the question often remains, What is the meaning of the meaning of God?

"God" is a good word at the grave, and it enhances the dignity of a wedding; most people believe in God. The idea completes the meaning of world whose vastness and complexity grow daily more oppressive. Yet, as a character in a recent novel remarked, "People seldom come to God till they have nowhere else to go."

There are all shades of belief in God, including near-belief and make-believe. Many merely "believe that they believe." For most God is a seventh-day refuge; for many He is little more than a slogan, like "For God and St. George," especially St. George. Often it is a case of "Nathan and Mencken and I; yes, possibly, probably God."

Americans train in three camps in the matter of religion; namely, convinced believers in the Christian God, practical atheists, and lukewarm Laodiceans, the latter the great majority, who lack the brains and courage either to serve or deny with their whole hearts



the God of the creeds. Factory-made souls, products of machinery, democracy, the church and the schools, they care less about God than about golf, cosmetics, money and scandals. At times they attend "divine services," hedging their bets on the safe side but neither God nor religion mean anything to them but a prudent and respectable tradition.

Such believers might say of their idea of God what St. Augustine said of time, "If no one questions me, I know; if I would explain to a questioner, I know not." For most believers God is chiefly a magic idea, an insurance against misfortune, an escape from remorse, a substitute for thinking, a blanket for grief, a solid and comfortable tradition, not safely to be questioned.

An increasing number, however, are willing to bring their idea of God to the bar of reason; the thinking world today is re-defining its-conception of the most compelling idea that ever engrossed the minds of men. As Professor Alfred N. Whitehead says, "Today there is but one religious dogma in debate: 'What do you mean by "God?"'—The modern world has lost God and is seeking Him."

### MANY MEN, MANY GODS

We could think more clearly about God, if we could dispense with the word "God". No word expresses so many diverse meanings. It is heavy with the scent of altars flowing with the blood of victims, sweet with the memory of a mother's prayers, harsh with the strife of clashing theologians. It stands for the whispering

deity whom the Druids worshipped in their groves, for the Mana of the Melanesians, the thundering Jove of Antiquity, the Void of Hindu philosophy, Yaveh of the Hebrews, and the All-Father. "God" is alike the One of the Mystics, and the All of the Pantheists. It has in turn meant Everything and Nothing, as well as all things that lie between these extremes.

"God" has been identified with the space-filling ether, with the space that ether fills, with time, and with space-time. He is the Unknowable of Spencer, the Principle of Mrs. Eddy, and the Absolute of Bradley. In many lands God has filled in turn the role of King, Judge, or Father. Man plays many parts in his time, but "God" has played all parts.

Professor Hopkins says, in his *Origin and Evolution of Religion*,

"Man has worshipped everything on earth, including himself, stones, hills, flowers, trees, streams, wells, ocean and animals. He has worshipped everything he could think of beneath the earth, metals, caves, serpents and underworld ghosts. Finally, he has worshipped stars, moon, sun, the sky itself, though only in part has he worshipped the spirits of all these objects."

It would appear worth while to re-examine our ideas of God. Vague, shifting definitions butter no bread in business or science. In the matter of God, the summit idea of both philosophy and religion, clear thinking should pay well. As the case now stands few people know what they or others mean by "God."

## THE GOD OF THE RELIGIONS

For Christians, Jews and Mohammedans "God" means the Creator of the Universe, a Supreme Person, infinite in power, wisdom and goodness. This God of the religions hears prayers, intervenes in the affairs of men, and saves souls for a blessed immortality.

The young and the simple picture him as an immense man, dwelling in a distant Heaven. The more intellectual deny him a body and sex, and enlarge his mental powers indefinitely beyond those of man, but in creed, hymn and prayer their God is worshipped as a conscious, purposive person, another Self among selves.

## THE SHADOW OF "GOD"

This traditional picture of God follows us like a shadow and is as difficult to shake off. There is no problem that we approach with more prejudices than the question, "How shall we think of God?" We are tied by all sorts of bonds to people who believe in God. "In God We Trust" is stamped upon our coins. "God" is the witness to every sworn statement; this name echoes in our ears from infancy to the grave. Give up this idea of God and you may split with your family, lose your job, and be excommunicated from your church. No doubt all of us live by this God-idea and its borrowed results more than we realize. It is a great adventure to question one's traditional idea of God; perhaps it is the greatest of adventures.

All this, and more, makes it all but impossible for the majority to change their ideas of God quickly, if

at all. Too much is at stake; habit and authority are too strong. Probably more than ninety per cent of human beings carry with them to the grave the same idea of God they were taught before they were ten years old.

If you would discover God without relying on tradition or authority, you must tread one or both of two paths, philosophy or intuition. It has been said, "Philosophy must be thought; it cannot be taught." But Bergson, most brilliant of present day philosophers, says, "Philosophy is simple." The principles of philosophy are simple; so are its conclusions, but philosophers and theologians often express themselves with such obscure profundity that they fail to understand each other, let alone enlighten the laity.

In consequence, the great majority take their theology from the pulpit, their philosophy from the literature of popular science and novels of opinion, like those of H. G. Wells, and their ethics from the customs of their set. The rest either gad about after strange doctrines, toying with "religious fancy-ware," from astrology to Bahaism, or drift along in supercilious contempt of those who seek by philosophy to find out "the truth about God."

After all what is philosophy? Most simply stated it is an effort to pass by words from the known to the unknown. The words stand for thoughts, sometimes at least, and the thoughts for fundamental realities. Philosophers claim to pass beyond the world of sense impressions to knowledge of the existence of

eternal truth, beauty and goodness—in other words God. Whoever supports by reason his belief in God is a philosopher, be he a savage or a savant. If you say “There is nothing in metaphysics,” you speak either as a philosopher or a fool. Perhaps we are all more or less of each.

### INTUITION AS A GUIDE TO GOD

Many thinkers, and more who are not thinkers, claim to know by intuition that God exists. They are suspicious of logical reasoning, one flaw in which may bring down the whole structure in ruins. They claim an “innate” knowledge of God; they “divine” him in the drama of Nature and life. The mystics, the inspired poets, Dante, Browning Tennyson, and writers like Carlyle, belong to this company, as well as a horde of lesser seers.

It may well be doubted whether there is a special faculty of the mind which gives us an intuitive knowledge of a personal God. Millions look up at the starry heavens and say, “There must be a God.” The thought flows in on them like the rush of an unexpected torrent, logic and arguments unthought of.

But these men are the inheritors of the traditional idea of God; they have often reasoned about him. The deposit of a lifetime of religious teachings has piled up in their minds like snow on a bending roof. Then, at a moment when the unutterable majesty of the star-lit dome catches them in a sensitive mood, they yield to the push of what? Intuition? Instinct? No, to the drive of a social tradition which at the time

they do not recall, but whose influence thrusts upon them the unwilling feeling that there must be a God—a personal God.

That background of tradition is there in the mind of every civilized man. In the moments when he fancies himself listening to the voice of a Supreme Person he is perhaps listening only to the echo of his own resurgent memories. If this is so, the only path to God is by way of reason illuminated by imagination. Even the Roman Catholic Church asserts that "The one true God can be known with certainty by the light of natural reason."

In this twentieth century analytic reasoning has invaded, I do not say conquered, every sphere of life from agriculture to amusements. Religion and gambling are the only fields where guessing is the rule. Everything but theology is increasingly subjected to rational analysis. "Theology is the most Egyptian of sciences," yet even theology is stirring in its sleep. Why not think? No doubt it is painful, but there is no substitute for thought.

### REASON AND MYSTERY

You never see nor feel more than an infinitesimal part of the Universe at any moment, or in a lifetime. Some scientist has estimated that a man's vision can take in at one time only one forty thousand millionth part of the earth's surface. The comparison for the Universe would give a ratio trillions of times smaller. It is a bold faith that beyond the tiny circle of sense

impressions which you haltingly grasp the same laws rule the Whole. All experience points to an endless series of mysteries beyond the bounds of the immediately known, not only repetitions of the familiar, but paradoxes, like the quantum theory of physics.

Within that outer darkness of mystery lie no doubt infinite secrets beyond the present vision of science. Whether man is the measure of the Universe is a question that presses hard on all who would ask what and where God is. Obviously God stands chiefly behind the veil of mystery; otherwise we should not have had the age-long search for him. Of this at least we may be sure, the measure of God cannot be less than that of his Universe. "What do you mean by 'God?' means, What do you mean by the Universe? God is the explanation of the World."

## CHAPTER II.

## THE STARS AND GOD

*"My friend, two different universes walk about under your hat and mine."* —THACKERAY.

Gods have grown fewer and God has loomed larger as the flat, motionless earth of antiquity has given way to a whirling globe measuring its course around a sun a thousand times its size. The solar system is now stated to be moving 300 miles a second toward the present position of the constellation Capricornus, so we may reckon ten billion miles a year as the speed with which we are journeying to unknown depths of the Universe. The Big Dipper first gleamed before human eyes some 200,000 years ago. We have been rushing onward ever since, and in 200,000 more years it will have vanished behind us, lost in a forgotten corner of space. If heaven is a fixed abode, we are much nearer to it, or farther from it, than when we were born.

## THE GALACTIC SYSTEM

There are some discrepancies in the estimates of different astronomers as to the numbers and distances of the stars. This need not trouble us, for the meanest figures that any astronomer gives us paralyze our imaginations. In 1925, Abbot, of the Smithsonian Institution, stated: "The telescope proves that there are thirty or forty billion stars in the Milky Way."



All of those are flaming suns, interspersed among which are nebulous masses of fiery vapor, and, we may guess, millions of planets, inhabited or uninhabited as the case may be. Finite and infinite cease to have important meaning for us as applied to the physical universe when we learn how large the measured finite is. The ring nebula of Lyra encloses an area large enough to hold 25,000 solar systems such as ours. Frost, of the Yerkes Observatory, says, "A casual cataclysm in a spiral nebula might even require a million years before the speeding waves of light could transmit the news to our post of observation." And light travels eleven million miles a minute!

### ISLAND UNIVERSES

Far beyond the remotest confines of our universe shines dimly into our greatest telescopes a patch of glowing stars and luminous nebulae called N. G. C. 6,822, an "island universe," marooned in space some 700,000 light years distant from our earth. This galaxy is no mean universe, being about sixteen billion miles in diameter, with millions of stars and nebulae, large enough perhaps to require an "infinite" God for its creation.

Luyton, of the Harvard Observatory, says: "That the whole of sidereal space is strewn with thousands of separate universes, comparable in size to our solar system, is now the view accepted by most astronomers." Seares places the number of non-Galactic nebulae at "about 300,000". According to Slipher, these nebulae

are moving through space at an average speed of over 300 miles a second.

Pannekoek declares that the position of our Galactic System is about 2,300,000 light years from the center of the entire aggregation of galaxies. Dr. Hebert D. Curtis says, "The more remote spirals may be distant from our galaxy ten million or more light years."

### NUMBER AND IMAGINATION

Little as such stupendous figures mean to our feeble imaginations they are our only measure of the heavens. It is sometimes said that such figures make us dizzy; we are too dull for that; for the most part they leave us cold, staring stupidly into "the inverted bowl we call the sky". The mind can truly imagine a span of but a few miles; in reality we do not grasp the distance between us and the horizon ten miles distant. Perhaps a few feet is the limit of the distance of which we can feel the full meaning.

Really to vision the vastness of "Our" Universe we should have to fly with the speed of light, 186,000 miles a second, for 300,000 years (Shapley) across the star-strewn disc of the Galactic System and through it for another fifty years to pierce its thickness, or twelve hundred thousand trillion miles one way and two hundred thousand trillion miles the other. At the end of that time, if thought and imagination could match the speed of light, we might be old enough and wise enough to realize that "God is Great" and perhaps not

made so exactly in the image of man as we had supposed.

Star distances are trans-imaginal; we do not think them; we think about the figures, but not the distances. "*God*" is whatever grasps in the unity of a continuous creativity the infinitude of relations between the great and small of this Unthinkable Universe. If one can survey such facts and still fancy he adds to knowledge by imagining that a self-conscious Person is the Supreme Reality, nothing in the nature of "proof" to the contrary can affect him.

What men most lack in their conception of God is not reason but imagination. Suppose one started on a voyage to a million light-year distant nebula; the seven thousand years or so of recorded human history would barely suffice him to take the first step of his journey, though he travelled astride a beam of light. Earth, with its men and gods, big and little, would have been forgotten before his journey was well begun, but the vision of the Absolute Mystery would have filled his thought from horizon to horizon.

Light is a snail and thought a sluggard for a journey like that, yet light would whirl us by one of the gigantic stars before we could grasp its greatness. Give us a ray we could ride with a million times the speed of light; multiply the speed of thought a thousand million times; then watch the pageant of the serried stars flash by—suns, planets, comets, nebulae. Plunge through a million miles of star dust; dash through billions of miles of inky darkness from your

forgotten universe to ever new ones; draw the curtain from worlds on worlds, seen not as pin points of light, but each in its gorgeous immensity. Watch the aimless procession hurtling through infinite space from God knows where to God knows whither. Then remember that you look with amazement upon only the shimmering surfaces of these squandered stars, all wrought out of the hot embraces of unimaginable hordes of electrons, all obeying through endless ages the same iron laws, the simplest of which are clouded with a mystery that we label with formulas that merely cloak our ignorance.

Imagine you could remember every detail of the journey, carrying all the past with you into the future that rapidly dissolved into the present. Still you would have sensed only the surfaces of things; to know God you would have to know why and how the eternal necessity of his nature wove the intricate pattern of the heavens. And how could you know this? Only by thinking God's thoughts with Him whose thoughts are deeds; only by an immersion in the life of the Universe that would instantly drown your petty individuality.

Can one face this New Universe of ours with untrammelled imagination and imagine that "Person", "Creator", "Spirit", or any other *word* can be more than a symbolic finger pointing to a nameless God? Such terms show what we mean by God; they do not show us what God is; they do not bring us into direct contact with that Reality. They are, and this is much, the affirmation that the meaning of all meanings is wrapped in the impenetrable mystery that we call God.

## MEASURING GOD

We measure men by their deeds; there is no better way, and it is quite natural that men, who, till yesterday, were ignorant of all that lay beyond the circle of the earth, and knew little of what lay within that circle, should measure God by the scope of the continents. We know better now, and whatever our definition of the Being, Power, or Principle, that gives existence, motion and ceaseless development to these clustered universes, dotting space at unimaginable intervals, the definition must measure up to the deed; God must not be thought less stupendous than his Universe of universes.

Since we cannot think the deed, or even state its terms, except in vague, empty mathematical measurements, strings of figures with a digit to the left and zeros trailing interminably to the right, much less can we picture or define in human terms like "person" the immensity of the Doer. We fall back on words like "The Infinite", "The Absolute", the "All", and even "Nothing", meaning no Thing, no idea that mind can form. The God of such definitions is called the metaphysical God. We are compelled to think of such a Being, if we believe the Universe is a coherent unity, but this is not the Father, Lord, King, or Judge, incarnated in Christ and revealed in the Bible; not at least, if these names are to be taken as literal descriptions of a real person. Applied to the metaphysical God such terms are mere poetic imagery, and bad imagery at that.

Emerson well said,

"Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit he that thinks most will say least. We can foresee God in the coarse and, as it were distant phenomena of matter, but when we try to define and describe Himself, both Language and thought desert us and we are as helpless as fools or savages."

"I prefer to call God 'It,'" said Emerson.

Chance has joined the dead gods, and "law" is not God. Laws describe but do not creat the relations which we call physical, chemical, and mental. Behind matter and its laws all but a befuddled few postulate with unwavering faith some unifying principle. Of course one can stare at the stupendous vision of the myriad galaxies and say there is no explanation; the Thing is too big and too mysterious for even the attempt to measure it with the yardstick of the human mind. Why struggle to grasp the inexplicable? The answer is that what counts is not the validity of our explanation but the belief that there is an explanation.

### DOCTOR DAVID STARR JORDAN ON GOD

In the end our idea of God will depend on the vividness with which we grasp the problem of making and running the Universe. The great majority of profound scientists do not believe in a personal God, simply because their contact with what is new, mysterious, and unutterably complex and vast in Nature is so intimate that they realize it is sheer nonsense to imagine a "person" as the Creator. The following let-

ter written by David Starr Jordan for publication in this book probably describes the conception of God held by the majority of scientists today:

"I will write my conception of 'God', premising that nobody knows any more about it than I do, and that the only conceptions worth having are inconceivable. The differences between the central force of the Universe and our anthropomorphic ideas are too great to be coordinated.

### WHAT IS GOD?

No human mind can answer this. A complete answer would be possible only to an intelligence who should stand on the side-lines of eternity and gaze on Infinity from its own level so as not to realize that Infinity exists. None of us humans have terms to frame our loftiest thought. There is nothing in the Universe more evident than its cosmic order. But this order is co-existent with cosmos, the Universe. "We find no trace of a beginning, no prospect of an end." We cannot conceive of cosmic order as existing without intelligence or meaning. For this, in whatever guise it may appear, we use the name of God. Some venture on other terms, but names alone do not yield knowledge.

To describe Infinity is to circumscribe it, and no limits can be drawn about Infinity. To try to do so marks the narrow range of our conceptions. Such human phrases as plan, purpose, personality have no meaning in Infinity. Even the human virtues, that

is, the methods by which human life may become happy or effective, can be ascribed to Infinity only through their relation to inescapable order. We know that all short cuts to happiness, involved in cheap pleasures following cheap temptations bring no permanent joys. The way to life's meaning, a human phrase, and to the happiness which makes it worth while, is austere and uncompromising. It illustrates in all its phases "the goodness and severity of God". In all ages and all climes there have been "lives made beautiful and sweet by self-devotion and self-restraint," and that this is so may indicate an attribute of God. Some say "only an attribute of humanity," but who knows that this is not in fact the same thing?

Man in all ages demands Authority (a pillar to lean against to save himself the worry of thinking) and Sympathy (a bosom to weep into). To secure these he has everywhere made gods in his own image, with priests as their interpreters, with saints, angels and madonnas to cheer him with their symbolisms."



## CHAPTER III

## ELECTRONS AND GOD

*"Science has a Hades, from which it returns to interpret the world, but the inhabitants of the Hades are merely shades."*

—F. H. BRADLEY.

## MATERIALISM

The God of the religions eluded us as we pursued Him among the immensities of the stars; shall we capture Him by dodging among the infinitesimal electrons?

Unimaginative, "hard-minded" people, of an atheistical turn, see nothing but matter and mechanism in the Universe. They assert that matter is the only reality, of which mind is a shallow superfluity. "Atoms and the Void" sum up reality, God becomes a shadow of the mind and the Great Machine "somehow runs itself," driven on by "blind forces." This is the faith (for faith it is) of millions of self-styled materialists.

We all feel an irresistible demand to explain the Universe. If we reach the limit of rational explanation in nebulous matter, blindly driven, the implication is that we are blind, not the Universe. The dark mystery which lies at the end of all our searchings may well be rather the "limit of visibility" than a proof that unreason is at the root of things. If the Universe is intelligible as far as we have explored it, so we may believe are its polar regions. Whether at bottom mat-

ter is blind or rational is a question upon which much light has been thrown by the electron theory.

Are the invisible, indivisible, self-contained electrons, dashing about in the vast solitudes of their atomic homes the alphabet of the Universe? If so, do they spell G-O-D, or M-A-T-T-E-R? It is a question of opinion—or prejudice.

The science of a generation ago (and the common sense of today) viewed the world as so much inert matter, whose mases were thrust hither and yon by forces outside of them. Matter was thought to be composed of groups of atoms, the latter being dense, inert, indivisible, and infinitesimal particles of "stuff" on which various qualities were hung, like hats on a rack. One might term this "wooden" theory of matter the hat-rack theory.

As different kinds of houses may be built by piling bricks in divers ways, so material objects were constructed by combining atoms variously. Pile a few atoms in a certain way and you got a molecule; mix molecules and you got mases. Many patterns resulted—stones, sticks, animals, the human body, with its ghostly mind, but always, it was conceived, the result was attained by combinations, collisions, adhesions, and repulsions of force-driven atoms, the forces being thought of as outwardly applied; electricity, for example, "charged" things.

The forces were sufficiently described as electrical, electromagnetic, chemical, etc. No one knew (or knows) exactly what these forces were in themselves,

but at any rate they attacked objects from without; matter had no life of its own. It was curious that there should be diverse forces, and from antiquity there had been a suspicion that there was at bottom only one kind of matter and one original force.

### THE PLIGHT OF THEOLOGY

Into this materialistic world, in which, with few exceptions, both saint and sinner believed, the vitalist thrust "life", to account for living organisms and the theologians imported a "soul" from a God external to the world of matter, to account for mind, religion and immortality. The difficulty was that mind and matter, life and atoms, mixed badly. We were left with two worlds, sundered by a thought-tight partition.

These who held that mind was as real as matter and preceded it in the order of creation had much trouble in defining its relation to matter; for they held it to be totally different in kind from matter, an alien stuff, governed by laws of thought that had no kinship with atoms. Materialism had one great advantage, because it appeared evident with the progress of science that matter with its laws and motions came on the scene before mind. Geology and astronomy were thought to prove that. Moreover illusions existed in plenty, and quite plausibly mind and its ideals were mere phantoms of matter. Primitive man was mostly matter, with faint traces of mind. The lowest living forms seemed mere automatic mechanisms; all human actions seemed fatally predetermined by physical, or

at most psycho-physical, antecedents. A mind that could know nothing except that it knew nothing and do nothing but wish vainly was evidently an incident of Nature rather than its explanation. The natural world seemed more and more the primary datum and the spiritual world an afterthought; matter had the floor.

The materialist, to be sure, had his difficulties in accounting for the evolution of complicated and varied organisms from a primeval mass of formless matter gyrating through space. Still he had a world of a sort to start with, and, finding laws in it that were apparently eternal, he was forced to assume that "somehow" they had accomplished all that we call Nature, including mind.

On the other hand the idealist stood naked and shivering in a coldly mathematical system of masses of matter, appealing to a blank and silent sky to vindicate the eternal worth and origin of mind, an appeal which he could not justify by science, nor demonstrate by logic.

### THE NEW MATTER

Dr. Robert A Millikan tells us that it is demonstrated that electricity is "granular" in structure. One is tempted to entertain the same old picture of grains of inert stuff. Consider these "grains." Dr. Millikan says: "An electric current is the passage of a definite material granular substance along the conductor; electricity is material." As to whether all matter is

electrical in nature he says we have "evidence, but not proof."

These inhabitants of the scientific Hades are extremely shadowy, to be sure. Like the astronomical distances no one ever really grasped their minuteness in his imagination. They are "shades", inference, to be accepted, certainly, but also to be interpreted. The question at issue is whether they are "stuff" or energy, things or "events". The weight of scientific, certainly of philosophical, opinion seems to be that they are as tenuous and living as the thoughts that describe them.

The nucleus of a helium atom, Dr. Millikan assures us, would be no bigger than a pin point, if multiplied in size ten billion times. A pin point is as small an object as most of us can see with the naked eye. The helium nucleus, then, is one ten billionth as large, and within that nucleus are four protons and two electrons. If one thinks he can imagine "thoughts" more "airy" than these, let him try.

Dr. Millikan adds: "The dimensions of these atomic nuclei are about one-billionth of those of the smallest object which has ever been seen or ever can be seen and measured in a microscope." If exact figures seem to make the infinitesimal intelligible we may note that Mill, in *Within the Atom*, says, "The diameter of an electron is two tenths of a thousandth of a millionth of a centimeter." Matter of this sort is no longer "material." In fact, Millikan says we may ignore size altogether in the electron and think of it as a mathematical point. Much may happen to "matter"

between our last glimpse of it in a microscope and these minimal mathematical measurements that stand for the electrons.

### ATOMIC GHOSTS

Long before we reach the elusive electrons we have swamped the imagination. What shall we think of such statments as the every "particle of matter large enough to be seen is composed of quadrillions of regions of electrical energy?" Consider this word "regions"; the implication is that if we could see an electron we should see an extended figure of definite, sometimes variable, shape. We are told that the electrons are sometimes round, sometimes oval. Are they transparent, colored, soft, hard? Who knows? We have passed from sight to faith, a faith, to be sure, based on mathematical formulæ, verified by scores of the ablest scientists approaching the problem from different angles. A faith that enables us to make successful predictions must be accepted provisionally. It is perhaps well to remember, however, that when the scientist assures as that the electrons are "grains" of "matter" he is speaking in popular language, much as modernist preachers when they affirm a personal God.

If you would like to know what an electron *really* is as described by an eminent physicist and philosopher, Prof. A. N. Whitehead, you may ruminate upon this language: "It must be kept in mind that we are dealing with the abstractions of physics—accordingly, in the language of physics, the aspects of a primate

are merely its contributions to the electro-magnetic field. This is in fact exactly what we know of electrons and protons. An electron for us is merely the pattern of its aspects in its environment, so far as these aspects are relevant to the electro-magnetic field."

Somewhat technical, but evidently quite destructive of the *picture* materialism has hitherto formed of matter. Gone are the solidity, inertness and blindness of the old material atoms. In their place we have forever invisible foci of energy, all incredibly alike; at least as far as we have been able to discover. Their "mass" is not a fixed quantity, so much dead and changeless weight, but a function of energy. "Mass is energy itself", says Mills, who reduces all forces to two, electrical energy and the primal unknown energy that lies at the root of the Universe. The latter, he says, manifests itself by changes in the location of the former. One wonders whether there are two forces here, or only one.

In any case there seems to be no ground for regarding the electron as a particle of "stuff" driven by the external shove of electrical energy.

The electron is a reality as subtle and tenuous as a thought. For us it is a thought, as much the symbolic expression of a hidden reality as any other idea. Not that we may call the electrons spirits, or thoughts of God; the case is not so simple. What we face in the electron is a naked, solitary being, which we can describe as a knot of electrical phenomena. In certain scientifically controlled experiments it exhibits energy,

motion, mass. It is capable of being expressed in measurements of space and weight, but these are no longer measurements of the dead but of the living, dimensions not of a neutral, material stuff, but of centers of original energy. Mass, extension, weight, in these hidden regions are merely names for mathematical equations which translate into abstract terms a quite inscrutable activity, of which we may at least say that it is nothing like either matter or mind as we have known them.

In any case, if there is a primal energy, it must contain the creative potencies of all existences. It is a mere matter of words whether one calls the mystery that lies behind existence "energy," or "God", though in either case it is as empty of concrete reality as an imaginary zero. From another point of view it is the only reality.

### ELECTRONS AS ORGANISMS

The only force we detect, if we detect any, is the electron's own force. On the evidence the electrons are completely endowed structures, self-contained organisms rather than mere mechanisms. They respond to an infinite number and variety of similar beings in a manner that is suspiciously intelligent.

For these electrons have properties of their own; that is, they change in shape, speed, direction, in mass itself. They find their way about and adjust themselves to the other electrons and protons of their atom universes very efficiently. Within the relatively vast



world of its atom home the electron acts like a social being; that is, in its orbital motions and other activities it adjusts itself to the other electrons of its atom. It *behaves*; its activity is from within rather than from without. It exhibits the characteristics of an organism rather than a machine. It is a unity of forces rather than an inert particle at the mercy of a mob of externally applied energies.

If we consider the atom, the resemblance to an organism is still more marked. An atom is more than the sum of the several or several hundred electrons which compose it. A *machine* is an *aggregation* of parts adjusted to each other by external forces and moved from without. It works because it is worked, but a group of entities that form the self-ordered whole that the atom seems to be resembles an organic individual.

It is the "interest", so to speak of each electron in its neighbors that calls for explanation. The electron seems to transcend itself; its powers display themselves with reference to other electrons far removed. Either we must stare in blank wonder at a universe of beings whose activities produce ever more complex patterns of organic nature, including man, a wilderness of "windowless monads", or we must believe that the laws that govern them reflect the activities of the Universe in each individual electron and atom. The picture is of a community of self-acting individuals reflecting perfectly the demands of a Universe.

## THE MYSTERY THAT IS GOD

What is the coordinating entity that relates electrons? It will not be the old fashioned First Cause, nor ether, nor a personal God. It will not be the First Cause, because we are not picturing a regressive series of causes running back into eternity, but seeking a necessary bond in the present to account for the atomic harmonies. It cannot be ether; for ether is a fanciful hybrid that is neither matter nor mind, nor yet electronic stuff. It is not a personal God; for no conception of personality is adequate to account for the generation of electrons.

Do the electrons float in ether, of which they are vortices, and is ether "the body of God?" A strange God this. Ether gives us neither matter nor God, as religion understands God, but only a sort of solidified space, denser than steel, more elastic than a gas, a grab-bag of guessess. Ether is not the God of the religions.

A Catholic scientist in a recent volume demonstrates that there is no such thing as ether. The electrons, he then assumes, cannot act across empty space. In the absence of a physical medium it is of course "God" that manipulates them—the Catholic God.

This seems a large and hasty conclusion. Perhaps the electrons *can* act across empty space; perhaps space is *not* empty. There are too many possibilities of further physical explanations of electrons to permit us to jump so soon to the assumption of God. Such a

God would be only the God of electrons. There is more to explain the world than electrons, and God must explain all. God should be something more than a Filler of vacuums.

We are forced to say, then, that the laws of electrons demand the postulate of an Inscrutable Mystery, which, whatever else it may be, is the unifying ground of the infinitesimal beings which compose our Universe. Of this Ground we can say only that it is that which gives limits to all finite existences. We may call this Mystery "God", but it is not the God of the religions, Christian, or other; or, perhaps more wisely, is *is* all that "God" is held to be and infinitely more. Consider the task of the Ruler of electrons.

### GOD AS A MATHEMATICIAN

Jevons says:

"Each constituent of a chemical atom must go through an orbit in the millionth part of the twinkling of an eye, in which it is successively or simultaneously under the influence of many other constituents, or possibly comes into collision with them; so that each of these particles is, as Sir John Herschelt has beautifully said, forever solving differential equations which, if written out in full, might belt the earth."

Similarly Du Bois Raymond remarks:

"We can imagine the knowledge of Nature arrived at a point where the universal process of the world might be represented by a single mathematical formula, by one immense system of differential equa-

tions, from which could be deduced for each moment the position, direction, and velocity of every atom in the world."

What this means is that the number of atomic combinations that take place at any moment in the Universe, for the adjustment of each of which to all the rest the Supreme Being is responsible, would be only approximately expressed by the digit 9 with enough zeros to the right of it to reach to the most distant star we can see with the most powerful telescope, a number along whose line of glittering ciphers we might travel for a million years with the speed of light before we had read it.

If the reader considers this a rhetorical exaggeration, let him remember that the molecules in a cubic centimeter of air number over 27 billions, a number to be further multiplied by the number of atoms composing each molecule, and again by the electronic population of the atoms. If the electrons whirl within the atom a "quadrillion times a second" and your cubic centimeter of air contains "many quadrillions" of these centers of electrical energy, your differential equations for the momentary relations of the parts of this tiny bit of air would "belt the earth" millions of times.

What wisdom is it that adjusts and maintains these relationships? It is not merely infinite knowledge that is demanded; for these adjustments must lie in the "mind" of your personal God not merely as so much static knowledge of relations, but as factors of his active will. Each electron of these

incredible hordes must be driven on with a view to all the subsequent developments of all the universes which space contains, otherwise "design" would fade from the picture. The "Designer" that does this is Absolute Mystery.

The latest estimate of the number of brain cells in the average human being is 12 thousand million, all alive and active, each of them in all men performing its delicate and intricate functions by virtue of the active knowledge and incessant energy of what? A Great Man? A disembodied self-conscious mind? Who can think that facility for such tasks is attained by merely multiplying human powers by infinity, or that a mind that does not possess the power to give law to a single electron can constitute an instructive picture in any sense, even a symbolic sense, of what we are pleased to call the divine mind?

The conclusion is that the atoms behind the formidable masses of matter that we see and wrestle with are as ghostly shadows of the old fashioned matter as the materialist considers thoughts to be. Visible matter is a rock completely enveloped in fog, and the mist of electrons is as tenuous and evasive as the mist of thoughts.

Where do the forces wander that govern the lonely electrons? The mystery of a universe seems to lie concentrated in each of them. How do the little beggars *know what to do*? One must think of them as omniscient little gods, or found their harmonies in a Universal Coordinator, *What* that Coordinator is it is

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not given us to know. You may call it "ether", "the Space-Time continuum," "Duration," or "God," and you are naming the same reality.

### ARE WE SURE OF GOD?

Do we *know* this God to be a real existence? We know that we must so think, if we believe the Universe to be a coherent system. Is this merely a profane gesture of thought, an idle answer to an impossible question? Mere logic can say neither yes nor no to this query. The affirmation of God in this sense is as truly an act of faith as the belief of the savage that thunder is the voice of an angry God. The difference is that we *know* thunder does not come from the throat of an irascible monster, while the belief that a Reality corresponds to our thought of the Supreme Mystery is secure against hostile criticism. If it is beyond the reach of reason to verify it, reason is as little able to destroy it. It is the irreducible minimum we must assume to explain the world and life and is at the same time the shining temple that enshrines all our hopes.

Have we after all reached God? At least we may say that we have ruled out of court the naive belief that the Universe is composed at bottom of inert matter, driven by blind forces according to impersonal, mechanical laws that derive their necessity from no one knows where. We have shown that we must assume a Being that accounts for energy as well as atoms, and ideals as well as electrons. Not a chance combination of atoms that have tumbled into the



grouping that we call the Universe, not a mechanism of the inorganic, and still not a "person", unless by person you mean a Being that includes as an incident of its existence the powers of our rudimentary, disjointed, and transitory minds. Such powers lose their identity in the Mystery, not because it is less than we, but because it is more than we, and infinitely different from us.

We shall all agree that Something governs the electrons. Even if we take them as the original realities, self governing, of which the Universe is composed, we shall have to account for their universal laws. The Unity that pervades them does what "God" does, creates and rules the Universe of matter, but this is not the Being men have worshipped as Father. You may call it "God", but you are calling it too much or too little. It is a colorless mystery, a mathematical necessity, a logical abstraction. Squeeze the juice from an orange and throw away the pulp; what have you left? The "spirit of oranges?" As much of God is left when you empty the world of actual things and thoughts and stare at empty space which you have filled with the shadows of a dream. *Something* rules electrons, but is it a Being outside of them, or a Reality within them? Is it One or Many, or both, or neither? Nobody knows. They move; we know not why; a nameless Harmony guides them; we know not what.

Electrons know their business; they are the builders and destroyers of worlds. They march and countermarch at the bidding of an unknown mystery.

But is it God? Let us be honest. Electrons are not persons or personal, but the God of the popes, priests and people, the God of poetry, prophecy and preaching is the Almighty Man. Shall we raise petitions to radiant energy? Shall we identify a "statistical average" with the God-in-Man Savior? If the matrix of the electrons is God, it is God in a sense at the polar opposite of the historical and current meaning of God.

There is a mystery behind the antics of electrons, but it does not explain enough of the world and life to call it God. Electrons may be the bricks out of which everything is made, but they are not the finished houses. To explain the origin of a brick is not to explain the architecture of St. Paul's Cathedral. The basal energy in which electrons disappear, or from which they arise, is not God but of God; it is one aspect of the Supreme Casual Mystery, but not more significant than the aspects which unify thoughts, colors, or sounds, none of which are made of electrons.

If God is not the unity of *all* the aspects of the Universe, He is not God. Electrons point to God, but they do not furnish the sole or sufficient revelation of Him.

What we learn from the electron theory is that matter is not God and cannot explain itself or mind. Matter when analyzed into electrons appears as a pattern of events woven on the background of a mystery which can be neither matter nor mind. It cannot be matter in the accepted meaning of matter, because its constituent atoms have dissolved into self-propelling

energy; it is not mind, because after all it is discovered by physical measurements which can never measure mind.

God is found by pursuing every path that leads out to the Ultima Thule of matter and thought. He is found, too, on the surface of things, as well as in their microscopical centers. We meet reality at its fullest meaning for us just when we drink in through our senses and imaginations the gaudy, solid, picturesque panorama that we call Nature and life. Sensations, images, and ideas are illusory in so far as they are not final; they are nothing apart from the basal Reality, but we cannot by pursuing physical or logical analyses down to the electron of the physicist or the "pure being" of the logician discover the Ultimate Reality-God-hiding behind the showy surface of sense impressions. God is in the fullness of things more than in their empty background of space, ether, or any other generality; he dwells in the clod as truly as in the cloud.

To understand and believe the electron theory, as interpreted above, is not to become religious. If we would find religion at the altar of electrons we must come bringing gifts in our hands. Religion is an attitude of worship and trust; it is the acceptance for life of whatever one takes to be the Ultimate Reality. Religion is the transformation of a conviction into an inspiration; some react with worship to the God of metaphysics and some do not; God knows why.

Much ridicule has been visited on the Absolute of

philosophy by those who think only in words, but those who have felt the meaning of the Absolute mystery have seized upon the heart of religion. Life is not for continual retreat to the thought of the eternal energy that guides the electrons, but for some the vision of this Absolute adds glory to the meanest task. "With certain persons", says F. H. Bradley, "the intellectual effort to understand the Universe is a principal way of thus experiencing the Deity."

## CHAPTER IV

## IS GOD A PERSON?

*"We should use the word 'God' to describe what is behind the mystery of existence."*

—ROBERT A. MILLIKAN

## "ENERGY" AND GOD

God is frequently defined as energy, power, or force, in expressions like, "God is the cosmic force." To most people energy is an obvious fact; in reality it is as much a myth as the traditional God. Things happen in more or less regular sequences; that is all we know. Behind the changes that we call effects we posit an energy that passes over from one object to another. There is no doubt a reason why changes occur in orderly fashion, but "energy" is merely a convenient symbol for that reason. Energy and force are not discoveries of the microscope or telescope; they are symbolic words that we thrust out at an ineffable Being. Energy is not God.

This view is foolishness to common sense. Is there no "force of gravitation?" Sir Isaac Newton expressly denied the discovery of such a force. "I do not invent hypotheses," he said. He merely measured the motions of certain masses of matter in relation to their proximity to each other; his "laws of gravitation" were merely an orderly statement of these facts of motion. It is an open question for science whether

“energy” or God is the reality which drives the stars in their courses. Sir Isaac Newton piously declared it was God; perhaps he was right.

Lord Kelvin said: “After fifty years of experiment with electricity we know no more of what it really is than at the beginning.” His statement is true of other ideas. We have injected many symbolic words into Nature—energy, life, soul, God. They are useful words; no doubt they stand for realities; yet we know nothing of the ghostly nature of these assumed realities. The picture we form of them is perhaps born of our own feeling of will energy, and the latter is perhaps only a translation of the sensations of muscular resistance.

Personal will power is the only active force we know, if indeed we know that. Consequently when the so-called “forces of Nature” seem blind we magnify the human will into the image of a Supreme Creative Person. Is this a futile gesture, or a discovery of God?

### PERSONS AS CREATORS

I would not assert that Nature is merely a shifting phantasmagoria of causeless, purposeless phantoms. I believe in a Supreme Mystery, the matrix of all existences. The protest is against describing the Mystery in terms either of the physicist's energy or the theologian's “person.” The objection is the same in both cases; the explanation does not explain. “Force” is not what we mean by God; it is merely the name for the manifestation of a mystery. It raises the question “Whose force?” or “What force?”

"Personality" is equally barren as a complete definition of God. A person, in order to create, should be able to make space, time and electrons. The most highly magnified man we can imagine would only stare helplessly at such tasks.

It is often urged that the stupendous size and distance of the stars argues nothing against the personality of God. The electrons, all alike, are the basal units of everything from a dew drop to a sun. The Master of the Universe has "only" to juggle them into various combinations and the task is done. A God that can make an electron can make a Universe, only He would have to be very, very big.

Such is the crude, naive, quite mechanical background of the thought of most believers in a personal God. Their picture of the Creator is that of a huge Mechanic. This is the blockhouse picture of creation, an inevitable fancy of the childhood of the race. As the average mental age of adult Americans is said to be fourteen years it is not strange that this picture lingers in the minds of the masses. It is possible to imagine a being essentially like us in will and mind, with just another quality or two added, that could build and run the little world we used to believe in. The fallacy lies in supposing that he needs to be multiplied only in size and power to make a Universe, or, if added powers be admitted, the failure to see that it is just these powers that quite annul our right to think of him as a "magnified-non-natural-man."

All men effect by way of physical changes is to move masses of matter by muscular action. By placing lighted matches and paper in proximity we furnish the final conditions for fire, but the material and laws of fire we neither understand nor create. Our part in the play is like that of the child that presses the button that sets in motion the machinery of a distant exposition.

We "create" poems, plays, oratorios, to be sure, but how much does that mean? Words spring unbidden from the unutterable depths of our unconscious selves; we group them by mental powers which we did not create. In moments of so-called "creative activity" we are rather the passive recipients of great thoughts and soulful harmonies than original creators. We are architects, carpenters, but not self-sufficient creators.

Orthodox theologians agree that God is a self-moved being. He draws his purposes and energy from no dark, unconscious background as does man. Such a Being would no more resemble us than a chronometer resembles a sun-dial, or a logarithm a log. When you begin to enlarge and alter your idea of a human person to construct a personal God you at once mutilate personality beyond recognition.

"God made me, so I must be like Him" is the reply alike of the child and the befogged Christian philosopher, but why must a cause resemble its effect? A calf is like a cow, but it would be bovine logic to assert that a photograph is like light. Only human gods could resemble human beings. The Greeks had an abundance of them, all dead now.



In numbers and mass the greater includes the less without changing its nature, but when you attempt to mix the powers of a jelly fish with the intellect of a Newton you are not adding, you are making a chemical transformation. A drop of ink would not change the color of the Pacific Ocean; it would vanish in its immensity.

Enlarge man and you magnify his weaknesses; annul his infirmities in the Infinite and he ceases to be man without becoming God. An infinite man would surpass all men in power, but excel no man in the quality of his powers. When you talk of complex, biologically evolved, half-finished products, like the human body-mind, and jump blithely from the finite to the Infinite you are merely trying to vault the fence by pulling on your boot straps.

### A FOG OF WORDS

The hopeless confusion that follows on all attempts to prove that God is a Person is well expressed by the greatest of English metaphysicians. F. H. Bradley:

“For most of those who insist on what they call ‘the personality of God’ are intellectually dishonest. They desire one conclusion, and to reach it they argue for another.—The Deity which they want is of course a finite person, much like themselves, with thoughts and feelings, limited and mutable in the process of time.—And for their purpose what is not this is really nothing.—Of

course for us to ask seriously if the Absolute can be personal in such a way would be quite absurd. —What is not honest is to suppress the point really at issue, to desire the personality of the Deity in one sense and then to contend for it in another, and to do one's best to ignore the chasm which separates the two. Once give up your finite, mutable person, and you have parted with everything which for you makes personality important. Nor will you bridge the chasm by the sliding extension of a word. You will only make a fog where you can cry you are on both sides at once."

A perfect illustration of this practice is found in a recent work by a well known theologian, Snowden, in the *Personality of God*:

"Man, being a personal product, the cause of man must also be a personal power—The Power that produced us must at the least and lowest be personal.—The personality that we find in the world is therefore a proof that there must be at least an equal kind and degree of being in the cause of the world, and *thus we mount with sure footing at one step from the personality of man to the personality of God.*"

But what a step! Merely from the finite to the Infinite! Later, the writer forgets how nearly he brought God down to man's level and argues for the inaccessibility of God to human thought in words which contradict his first conclusion:

"The vastness and complexity and mystery of the Universe indicate a Causative Mind which is incon-

ceivably, if not infinitely, greater than our own—Such a mind transcends our mind as that of an animal or a vegetable.—A single beam of light is not the whole sun. Personality in man is only a gleam of personality in God.—It is true that we must hold that human personality is similar in nature to the divine personality as far as it goes; but it goes only a little way, and the human is only a tiny copy and pale reflection of the divine.”

Using the writer's own comparison, in effect, we may say that the human mind is such a “tiny copy” of the infinite mind as the mind of a cabbage is of a Shakespeare's. It might comfort a cabbage to know that, but it would not enable the cabbage to predict what Shakespeare would say or do.

### SOME MUDDLED MODERNISTS

The Modernists who fight to retain the traditional belief in a personal God (together with their pulpits and professorships?) writhe in a maze of words, “with many a twist and turn,” but come out at the same place where they went in. Father Conway, eminent Catholic Defense Lecturer, who would of course deny that he is a Modernist, says:

“The highest thing we know on earth is human personality—intelligence, volition, self-consciousness. The Maker thereof must be at least that highest thing.”

That is to say, a carpenter must be at least a table, a philosopher at least a tadpole, a sun at least an atom. Shall we define God as what he is at least, or at most?

Is God "at least" an electron? Sublime nonsense!

Conway adds:

"God is the Absolute and Transcendent Being, utterly over and above all possible modes of finite creation."

Well, if God is THAT, he can resemble in no respect human personality. God is God, and Man is Man; why be ashamed of either, or falsify each by picturing him as the other?

Professor Shailer Matthews, Dean of the University of Chicago Divinity School, argues, "There must be that which is personal in that from which personality has emerged." From what did human personality emerge? From a long series of ascending animal species that wriggled with infinite struggles and failures up to the mentally half-awake mammal that we call "the summit of creation", in reality the summit of a physico-chemical disturbance in the "dust of the ground." I am no materialist, but if I were to sketch the Sculptor from the statue, I should have to say, with Swedenborg, "God is a Man—He has a body and everything pertaining to it; that is, a face, breast, abdomen, limbs and feet." Matthews' logic should compel him to say, There must be that which is a physical body in that from which the human body has emerged. Why honor God with the virtues of our minds and rob him of the charms of our bodies?

Professor Matthews adds that he "trusts Him—the awful, mysterious God of abyssmal space, of galaxies, of stars, of ether, of evolution, of human

liberty, as Father." Then, seized with metaphysical cramps, he hedges by saying, "When we believe in the Father we do not believe in some superman—We think of Him as immanent reason and purpose and love, in Whom we live and move and have our being."

This is to take back with his left hand what he gave with his right. "Immanent reason" is our reason, the only reason of whose existence we have the slightest knowledge. And the "Whom" is merely a magnified image of the personal self. Back of our purpose, reason and love lie what? More reason and personality of the same sort? To say, Yes, makes God the Superman Matthews would deny. To say, No, is not to deny the existence of God, but to deny that we hold the Key to the Universe in the pale reflection of our human selves which we ignorantly liken to God.

Professor Macintosh, of Yale Divinity School, says, "We know of no higher kind of reality than the personal, nor can we imagine any." Theologians have short memories at times, for in the same essay he says, "My real self is not ideal and my ideal self is a fiction." Since his real self is personal and his ideal self is the idea of a perfect person, his personal God seems to be only the personification of a self which is neither ideal nor real.

### THE REPLY OF THE PERSONALISTS

The Personalists often quote their chief philosophical defender, the late Professor Bowne:

"We should be much more truly persons, if we

were absolutely determinant of all our states—in us personality will always be incomplete. The absolute knowledge and self-possession which are necessary to perfect personality can be found only in the absolute and infinite being on whom all things depend. In his pure self-determination and perfect self-possession only do we find the conditions of complete personality; and of this our finite personality can never be more than the feeblest and faintest image.”

This fine sounding argument says merely that if Man were God he would be perfect—a perfect *personality*. But would he? A thing is just what it is known to be; strip the limitations from these human personalities of ours and what have you left? Only “self-subsistent essence,” the God of Spinoza, not a refined and enlarged edition of Man, but the annihilation of Man in any sense in which we can conceive him. Poetically the ocean is mirrored in the rain drop; actually the rain drop that merges with the ocean has ceased to be. Is the ocean only a rain drop with its limitations removed? In the last edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica Einstein says, “We fare no better in our speculations than a fish which should strive to become clear as to what water is.” Should the fish guess that water is a fish with its limitations removed, his logic would be as valid as that of Bowne. A perfect God—the Infinite—would not be a perfected man, but the Unthinkable Mystery that He is.

## GOD IS NOT A SPIRIT

Several "educated" adults have explained to me that they do not believe God is a person: "Oh no, God is a spirit", they declare.

"But what is a person?"

"Why, a person is a human being with a body, but God is a bodiless spirit."

Incredible assumption, yet held as certainty by millions. To them a bodiless spirit multiplied by infinity is God! Particularly acute persons sometimes say, "Of course God is not a spirit; God is spirit, universal spirit."

Since no one knows what a spirit, spirit, or universal spirit, divorced of body, is, all needed attributes of God can be safely dumped into this capacious word. But it is only an evasion. This bodiless divine spirit, it turns out, feels, plans, wills and acts much like a human being. But human beings think with their brains and "God" has no brains.

A disembodied spirit is a pleasing speculation, but the only spirits we know are limited in act and thought by bodies. The spirit may be able to exist apart from the body; that is a hopeful guess, but it is idle to found the existence and nature of God on a guess. It would seem that a spirit bereft of its body would be as different a reality from our personalities as light is from the seven-fold color band that shines through a glass prism. One who knew light only as the varied-colored spectrum would dwell in the same rainbow of illusion

as those who affect to think of God as "a pure spirit."

To divest this spirit of ours of a body, to inflate it with all space, and then call this Bubble the Supreme God is to make of it as imperfect an image as the crudest idol of stone. A better symbol perhaps, but not the best.

All we can possibly mean by calling God a spirit is that He is not flesh; for when we try to think of Him as a conscious, feeling, willing person, we are not thinking of him as a pure spirit, but as just that kind of mental-physical person that this earth-bound, flesh-clad spirit of ours is.

Those who call God a spirit say that he is everywhere at all times. This is to affirm the personality of God in words but to deny it in fact. A person, body or no body, is the center not the whole of his Universe. It is of the essence of a person that the rest of his world is away from, outside of him. The only persons we know or can imagine are individuals located at definite points in time and space. The only definite conception man has formed of something which pervades all space is the ether of the physicist, and certainly the whole of the ether is not everywhere, is not an individual, and, if we live in it, we do not live by it.

To talk of an omnipresent person in whom we literally dwell is merely to assume a spiritual ether, minus most of the attributes of the only sort of spirits we know. If there is a God, He is the source of our spirits, but not a spirit, the ground of personality, but not a person.



Sunlight, water, soil, seed and air made the rose, but they are not like the rose. Is there somewhere a mysterious flower hiding in space, the Mother of all roses? Mythology! Yet that is as likely as that a spirit made us.

### SPIRIT AND SPACE

All our thoughts are framed in shadowy space pictures, materiality, stripped of its grossness, but retaining its shell. God as a spirit is actually thought by us so much space, spherical and infinite. We can think about space without God, but we cannot think of God as an infinite Spirit, except as a being which merges into infinite space.

On a blazing summer's day we can dimly see waves of heated air shimmering above the landscape. Something of this sort, it may well be, was the origin of the idea of an infinite spirit. Some such misty space form, however much denied in words, is, I believe, always behind the thought, "God is a spirit", a mere metaphor, not a description of a really existent Being.

Eliminate this nebulous background of space as spirit and what is left? Nothing—the Great Void of Indian philosophy the One of Plotinus. God may be, must be No Thing, and that means no spirit and no space; for these are idealizations of things.

We know our own spirits as centers of activity, which no doubt arise out of the Universe, but which we cannot by mere enlargement identify with the Cause of the Universe. What is this personality of ours? A minute concentration of universal history, ripened into

the passing flash of light we call self-consciousness. To clip this bubble from the surface of the vast sea from which it arose and inflate it to the dimensions of the All-creator is—well, sheer nonsense.

In a sense the rose lies dormant at the meeting point of seed and soil, but not as a rose. In a figurative sense our conscious spirits may be said to spring from an unplumbed fountain of spiritual life that we call God, but their appearance is the coming of something *new*, not a trivial copy of a masterpiece, of which we are infinitesimal miniatures.

The ancient monk, Serapion, like many of the early Christians, was convinced that God had a real body, human in form, though larger and more beautiful. When, after long argument, his brother monks convinced him that God had no body, but was a spirit, he threw himself on the ground weeping, because they had taken away his God and left him no one to pray to.

God has long since lost his body for the educated, but his "spirit" still lingers. We need not weep at parting with God conceived as a spirit; when men learned that God had no body, they learned to worship him as a spirit, and when they learn that He is not a spirit they may learn to worship Him as the Supreme Mystery.

### WHAT GOD IS

Is the Universe, then, a hopeless enigma, God a gorgeous guess, personality a flickering rush light, vainly winking in infinite darkness, and life a transient shadow on a phantom stage crowded with illusory

scenery? Exactly that, if we cannot assert the existence of anything beyond the messages of our senses. But the very limitations which establish our ignorance are positive assertions that a Reality lies beyond. Whispers reach us from a bottomless cavern of mystery; always the Beyond calls us. Why have we just this kind of world and not one of the other countless possible worlds we can imagine. Something limits finite existences to just the form they have; something gives law; out of some fathomless depth the exhaustless energy of the Universe rushes. We may not know what that energy is; the word is a mere symbol, but whatever the Secret of the Universe is *that* is God.

Where there is mystery there is hope; where there is hope there is the beginning of faith. Always at the limit of our search for truth and reality rings the echo of the Invisible More. *Whatever within that mystery it is that gives form and motion to things and meaning to ideas is God.* This may seem a barren and colorless definition of God, but its worth for religion will appear later.

### DEAD GODS

From our point of view all definitions of God are infected with error. Taken literally they are delusions; none of them exhausts the meaning of God. But from the standpoint of religion they may all in a measure promote spiritual harmony. A certain idea of God may serve one man for a lifetime; another will outgrow several ideas of God in turn. For religion it

is important, but not all important, whether an idea of God is absolutely true. Truth has degrees; religion may be served after a fashion even through false gods.

This is far from saying that it matters little what conception of God men hold, provided their religion fits the idea and their aspirations are devout. It matters much; the fate of nations has turned on their conception of God. Behind the guns of the aggressive West crowding on the passive East lies a diametrically different conception of God. Professor A. N. Whitehead, speaking of the conception of God as the "King of Glory", says, "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the bones of those slaughtered because of men intoxicated by its attraction."

John Wesley said to a Calvinist, "Your God is my Devil." That was the clear-cut utterance of a real man, not a flabby indifferentist. We live by our ideas of God; some such ideas are unspeakably truer and better than others. Yaveh was a good God for David, but to us he is a barbarian despot. The God of Jonathan Edwards, a God who "toasted sinners over the flames of Hell", while the "saved" looked joyfully on, was the God of one of the best men of his day, but it was a dark day. The "Angry God" of Edwards is dead today for all in America except the medieval fanatics in Dayton, Tennessee, and elsewhere, and even with these the flames of Hell burn faintly.

Every man to his taste and every God for his man, if he can find no better. Why not? The starry heavens viewed through a pin hole and seen through

a six foot lens are infinitely different in extent, quality, information, and inspiration. Not all men can wield a telescope; on the other hand pin hole perspectives grow monotonous. Any God-idea may be useful in its place and later be outgrown like a child's toy. Some ideas of God indeed may be desperately harmful on the whole; perhaps never entirely. We are forever re-writing the lives of humanity's heroes. There is one life for the child, another for the youth and another for the adult scholar. Witness the clashing biographies today of Washington, Lincoln and Franklin. It would be singular indeed if we knew more about God than about Napoleon, Goethe, and Wilson.

There is nothing changelessly sacred about the verbal expression of any idea, not even if a Canadian judge sent a man to jail for sixty days for referring to Jehovah as "a touchy old party." That may be bad manners, but it is not "blasphemy." Names are not sacred. Action directed toward higher spiritual achievement is sacred; absorption in holy ideals is sacred, but the words and arguments that serve our thoughts are mere scaffolding, to be swept ruthlessly away when we would build new mansions for our souls. All words that attempt to describe God are but symbols and symbols change with the times. Says Charles Wagner, "For the danger in fine words is that they live a life of their own. They are servants of distinction that have kept their titles, but no longer perform their functions—of which royal courts offer

as an example." The word "God" has reached this stage for millions.

Otto Spengler in his profound book, *The Decline of The West*, remarks:

"All these deities and more came to be felt as a single numen, though the adherents of a particular cult would believe that they in particular knew the numen in its true shape. Hence it is that Isis could be spoken of as 'million named.' Hitherto names had been the designations of so many gods different in body and locality. Now they are the *titles* of the one whom every man has in mind. And reality is always more than and different from its title."

The Supreme Mystery is perhaps the best title for God. Mystery is the word that best escapes the limitations of other verbal symbols, while retaining the religious elements of reverence and hope. The perfect definition of God would tell us how the myriad forms of Nature and mind flow out of the Infinite. No phrase will ever be coined which does that. The abstract terms, energy, law, and so on, are symbols of mechanical operations. One might as well say that motion or number is God.

God is often defined as "pure thought." Matter and minds are illusory; therefore we found their existence on a still shallower illusion, an empty word. "Thought". To explain genuine living thoughts by a meaningless "Thought", divorced from thinking persons, is to explain soap by a soap bubble, the earth by empty space. No doubt all our experience of Nature

and man is colored by thought, *our* thought, that insoluble compound of feeling, will and reason which we call the personal self. How would *we* know anything, if we did not add *me* to it? We dangle along behind the forth-marching Universe like the tail of a kite; an invisible unknown cause—God—makes the kite soar; why degrade IT to the similitude of the tail?

To name God pure thought, act, will, or idea, is just one more subtle and insincere way of reaffirming the personality of God, a God stripped of body, feelings and ideas, floating in a super-vacuum above space and time. One might better worship India's million idols of wood and stone; then, at least, he would know what he meant by God. Millions are groping for God in the mist of a God-belief that vanishes in a barren word, such a "force", or "thought", or are wallowing in the bog of a muddy Pantheism that identifies God absolutely with Nature. Both ways lies atheism.

"Mystery" is abstract, to be sure, but it is not the name of an individual person, thing, or principle. It is the focal point where metaphysics and religion meet and merge. In Mystery the crude personal God of popular religion and metaphysical abstractions like the Infinite vanish as terms to describe God, but they meet behind the veil in a nameless harmony, in which we may believe and which we may worship.

### HOW SHALL WE THINK OF GOD?

By "God" I mean the active casual bond of the Universe, a Reality which is neither identical with all things, nor a thing existing apart from other things.

Is God all, or is He in all, but not all, or an individual apart from all? are questions which may be answered by both yes and no. This seems like ending in hopeless contradictions, but it is the questions which are hopeless, because they are incompetent. All is at last mystery and the Mystery is God.

Is God conscious? No. Is He unconscious? No. Can we form a picture of a Being that is neither conscious nor unconscious? No, but we can perceive from the nature of the Universe that its Fountain Head must be different from either the conscious or the unconscious. The orthodox accept a Supreme Mind above all imagination. If, instead of calling it Mind, we call it Mystery, does It become more impotent than mind? I cannot see why. Is mind alien to it because IT sweeps our minds along as incidents in its embrace of universal existence? By no means; still less is it identical with or similar to mind.

The Mystery does not survey and then solve the problems of creation as a great Mind would. Its business is neither to think out a theory nor to juggle from a distance electrons and brain cells. God is not even a mysterious "inner life" of the world, except symbolically. God *is* the Universe and God *is not* the Universe, which means merely that both ways of conceiving God are equally necessary and equally partial. The unity of God with matter and thought is so intimate that we express it by saying that God is the Universe; the antithesis between God and the Universe is so great that we say that God is not the Universe.



Your Self is not merely the agglomeration of thoughts and feelings that fill your consciousness at a given moment, yet a self without thoughts is a zero. Raise the powers of human selves sufficiently and you get an Infinite Thinker, the orthodox God. But greater mass sometimes means a change in the qualities of the mass. Enlarge the earth billions of times and changes will take place in the matter of which it is composed. The interior of the largest stars contains matter in a state of heat, density and pressure unrealizable on earth, cosmic rays foreign to earth radiate from them. Greater size changes the constitution of the stars; similarly your Infinite Person is no longer a person.

All our "laws" are laws of the appearances of a few parts that we study within a Whole we never penetrate. The laws of the Whole must be forever beyond human calculation. People ask for a scientific verification of the existence of God, for a laboratory confirmation of his existence. Doctors of philosophy have asked me for this. Puerile demand! Any reality so demonstrated would of course be a finite fact, not God. Neither God nor the universality of any scientific theory can be "demonstrated" within the segregated chip of the Universe that we know. Light the interior of a sealed cave with all the world's electric lamps and you shall not add to your knowledge of the mountain that envelopes it. We are cooped up in an infinitesimal sac of an infinite Universe; unless there were a principle of living unity throughout it, there would be no unity anywhere. The God of the religions vanishes in

the uncharted depths of space but the God that *is* the Universe taken as a divine unity blinds us with excess of light. We lack a name and image for IT, but IT IS.

These multitudinous definitions of God arise from singling out aspects of the Universe and saying God is this, that or the other. But God is neither a part of the Whole, nor a Whole among parts. It is natural, but misleading, to personalize or mechanize the Deity, according as Man or Nature most absorbs us. Speaking in metaphors it is harmless enough to say, "God is light", and so on, but these one-sided definitions by the score are fanatically thrust upon us as creeds, and slogans of worship, within which we are asked to compress the Infinite.

We shall easily recall the disasters that flow from taking too literally these narrow conceptions of God when we remember Wilhelm Hohenzollern's words at the Hamburg banquet at which he voiced the idea of God that dominated his life: "Eyes front! Heads up! Bend the knee before the Great Ally who never yet forsook the Germans!"

On the belts of the soldiers who ravaged Belgium were engraved the words, "Gott mit uns." What God? Whose God?

Professor W. E. Hocking, of Harvard writes me the following:

"You ask me for a definition of God. I do not believe I could give you anything significant that way, definitions are *aperçus*; they come in the course of re-

flection and are explained by their context; as point blank statements they can have little meaning.

God is the eternal activity behind the surface of Nature; God is the demand of life to all living things, the demand to do one's living well; *God is the total response of the world to the total thrust of our will.* These are various aspects of God. They are not definitions."

When we talk of God, or worship him in words, we must use symbols. He is for us in turn the glowing sun, the rippling water, and again the light that never shone or sea or land. At times, for some minds, he may well be symbolized as a person. The fatal error is to embody one of these partial insights into a creed and seek to whip the rest of mankind into line with our private vision. Thence come the missionaries of intolerance and the wars of religion. This is no trivial error. It is the error of the strife loving Fundamentalists, to whom God is always and nothing but a Person. It is the error of the Humanists, to whom God is only Man. It is the error of the Pantheists, to whom, as F. H. Bradley said, "Everything is so worthless on the one hand, so divine on the other, that nothing can be viler or can be more sublime than anything else." It is the error of the blatant, commonplace atheist, who substitutes "omnipotent matter" for God.

One may place his cards wrongly in a game of solitaire, winning falsely, or losing falsely; no harm is done, but people who get the fixed idea that God is wholly and finally a Person, or Necessity, Love, Good-

ness, Thought, Law, or Matter, are among the world's great trouble makers. No human phrase can monopolize the truth about God.

On the front door of a church of one of our two hundred sects I recently read the legend, THE HOME OF TRUTH. I passed by, without knocking. The Universe is the home of truth and Mystery is its name.

### WHITEHEAD'S IDEA OF GOD

No one in recent years has written more profoundly of God than Professor A. N. Whitehead. This is his conception of God (Science and the Modern World, p. 249) :

"God is the ultimate limitation, and his existence is the ultimate irrationality. For no reason can be given for just that limitation which it stands in his nature to impose. God is not concrete, but he is the ground for concrete actuality. No reason can be given for the nature of God, because that nature is the ground of rationality."

"Irrationality" here does not mean the unreasonable, contradictory, or chaotic; it means that which is beyond definition—mystery conceived as universal cause. Whitehead says of his "ultimate irrationality", which is God, "There is nothing with which to compare it; it is Spinoza's one infinite substance." In the use of the word "substance" Whitehead appears to be defining the undefinable God, but if one reads Santayana's appreciation of Spinoza's doctrine of God, he will see that Spinoza's "substance" is as broad as "irrationality":

“When people tell us that they have the key to all reality in their pockets or in their hearts, that they know who made the world, and why, or know that everything is matter, or that everything is mind—then Spinoza’s notion of the absolutely infinite, which includes *all* possibilities, may profitably arise before us. It will counsel us to say to these little gnostics, to those circumnavigators of being, I do not believe you; God is great.”

To define God fully would be to master the universe, to eclipse God, or at least to become one with God, and that would be to cease to be a person; for God is no person.

## CHAPTER V.

## TWO GODS OR ONE?

*"The mixing of things is the great Bad."*

—MRS. THOMAS CARLYLE.

Mixing gods is the supreme confusion. Much credit is due to the first man who dreamed of One Great Man who rules the Universe; he believed he had found God, but the twentieth century thinker who believes in a God that is a person is a worshiper of the traditional idol of his tribe. A statue of Moses, Job, or Jesus, though it differed from the real man, might inspire us. But when a symbol falls as far short of picturing God as a gilt paper star does of the glories of Betelguese it becomes a degrading superstition, an idol, whether it be made of marble, or be the magic phrase, "a personal God."

Idols are among the most valuable of human possessions, but only when they are labelled idols. What is evil is to pretend your idol is the only true God. Empires have fallen and religions decayed because men failed to distinguish in time between idols and realities

Let the more enlightened deny that they mean to picture God as a man; let them insist that they worship a spirit in spirit and truth. Yet in the background of the minds of most believers hovers the awful image of a King, a Judge, or at best a Benevolent Philan-

thropist, old, hoary, unbending and unsmiling. Many Modernists deny the existence of such a God but go on worshipping in public without explaining that their personal God is a fiction.

## TWO HERETICS

If one must have two gods, let him honestly acknowledge the fact, like that very able theologian, Dean Inge, who says:

"I agree with Tyrell that 'the fiction of God's finitude and relativity is a necessity of man's religious life, but that the interests both of intellectual truth and religion require us to recognize the fiction as such, on the pain of mental incoherence on the one side and of superstition and idolatry on the other.' "

Father Tyrell was for this heresy buried without the rites of the Roman Catholic Church.

Dean Inge further says that, according to the Personalists,

"God must be a spirit among other spirits, not the deepest life and final home of all spirits. Such a conception of the Deity, if counterbalanced, as it should be, by that of a personal devil, is a piece of useful symbolism for the conscience in its struggle with sin, but, if be offered to us as a metaphysical truth, we can only say that such a God would not be a God at all."

The Dean concludes by saying:

"Perhaps we may say that the notion of a finite God is one that a moralist can never afford to forget nor the metaphysician to remember."

Commendably honest; the God of metaphysics is the only real God; the God of orthodox worship is a pure fiction. Of the worship of such a God we say with Matthew Arnold:

“Let it be understood then that when the Bishop of Gloucester and others talk of the blessed truth that the God of the Universe is a person they mean to talk not science but rhetoric and poetry. In that case our only criticism will be that it is bad rhetoric and bad poetry.”

### DOCTOR FOSDICK ON GOD

Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick, eminent Modernist, frankly defends the worship of two gods:

“Popular Christianity, therefore, approaches God with the regulative idea of a human individual in its mind, and, while popular Christianity would insist that God is much more than that, it still starts with that, and the enterprise of stretching the conception out is only relatively successful. Even when it is successful, the result must be a God who is achieved by stretching out a man.”

This “relatively successful” poetic fiction of a God, Fosdick believes is necessary. “Nevertheless”, he says, “the religious man must have imaginations of God, if God is to be real.” The whole issue turns of course on which religious man we are talking of and what sort of imaginations. Multitudes would leave the churches if they fully believed that the God they worshipped there as a Person was a pure fiction. They might,



however, let it be hoped, construct better imaginations of God than those they abandoned.

"Creative reality, conceived in spiritual rather than physical terms—that undoubtedly is God", says Fosdick. This phrase "creative spirit", is an attempt to drag the cosmic energy of physical science into the camp of Personalism. It is just one more imagination, logically impossible and poetically crude, but an advance on earlier superstitions.

Doctor Fosdick has been kind enough to give me for publication his present conception of God:

"Perhaps you have heard of Leslie Stephens' remark that the theologians have defined God with the particularity that a good biologist would not use about a black beetle. You cannot possibly crowd the conception of Infinity into the finite mind without bursting the mind, and there is no possibility of getting an adequate idea of God.

I should say that what we can do is to get a road out toward the idea of God, travelling on which we may be sure that we shall not have to turn about and start again. If, however, you insist on a statement as to my conception of God, I should say, 'God is the reality behind and in the Universe, interpreted in terms of the spiritual values which we experience as goodness, truth, and beauty, and therefore conceived as having personal purposes of good-will for his creation.'"

"Conceived as" is the key to this excellent statement.

It should be plain by now that the Being that lives

equally in the atom, the clod, the star and the soul, is not the Father of the hymns, Yaveh of the synagogue, or Allah of the mosque. Yet many educated adherents of the churches believe in one God, worship another, and frequently confuse the two both in theory and practice.

If the God of the religions, whether worshipped as an idol of brass or as creative spirit, were an appropriate, a worthy, a vital symbol of the real God, there would be some justification for the cult of two gods. Since it is not, the working, orthodox idea of God is, for those who share our view, a dead formula, an egregious, if unconscious, hypocrisy, or an unconscious relapse into infantile imagery.

Some people thrive on formulas, for a time at least. They are the watch dogs of conservatism. They may not provide for growth, but they serve to preserve the grave clothes of the past. Timid and cautious souls conserve their social and religious interests in this bottled up wisdom, which does very well till the new wine bursts the old bottles. And today the bottles are bursting.

### MYSTICISM AND THE MASSES

It is a hard saying for the religionist to ask him to do without temples, symbols, dogmas and ritual. This religion of Mystery is not, it will be said, for the plain man, the illiterate, children, the unimaginative slaves of toil, or the imaginative slaves of fancy. It will be asserted that it is for the recluse, the philoso-

pher, the devout agnostic. The average man is sense bound; he wants certainty without the pains of thinking, peace on the stroke of a bell, or the wafting of a censer. He would be saved by another, told what to believe and what to do. He must be given something to handle—a Book, a candle, a rosary to finger, a cross to adore, a formula to repeat. Only a religion that assails him through his senses can reach him. His God must be pictured as a Man; for it is only man he can know or imagine.

All this is measurably true, but we are not all children, savages, or the prey of sensuous fancies. Even among the uneducated are many people whose ideas of God are not puerile. The traditional idea of God means nothing to them, but they believe “some Supreme Being” exists. Such people are for the most part inarticulate; they are not propagandists for or against any faith. Crude common sense has led them to shed the trash of time and custom and rest their religion on the simple faith that “some sort” of God is back of Nature and history. These modern deists miss something of the inspiration of socialized religion, but they escape the rubbish of the ages that encumbers it.

### SHOW YOUR COLORS

The plank is narrow on which the believers in the Supreme Mystery stand, but it is thick and strong. The philosopher knows little more about it than the “plain man”, but he can account logically for his dissent from

the traditional faith. A great many leading thinkers hold the views I have advanced, but in most cases do not publish their views, often, no doubt, because it might mean loss of position, or opprobrium of sectarians. "It is true", as Glenn Frank remarks, "that today we do not burn our heretics; we fire them," but what the punishment lacks in intensity, it makes up for in length.

Speaking in a New Haven church recently, an eminent professor reduced the meaning of "God" to a "principle of Goodness" running through the Universe. Admitting the futility of the creeds, he announced, "On the whole the Church has been on the side of good as against evil, and therefore it is well to affiliate with the Church."

When this man joins the crowd in the worship of the Supernatural Man he confirms the ignorant in their superstition. One may, of course, speak of the "Charioteer of the day driving his steeds across the eastern horizon" and still believe the circling earth brings into his line of vision the light from a radio-active star called the sun, but he does not preedict the tides from data gained by shouting through a megaphone to the "Charioteer" for information. His poetry does not deceive his intimates, but his example misleads the simple, some of whom take the Bible and the creeds so literally that they pass even today intolerant laws and form death-dealing conspiracies to punish those who will not conform to their creeds.

## “WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS”

A godless, churchless state, it is often urged, would be well on the road to ruin. The masses live by concrete “mysteries” not faith in abstract Mystery. Take away their personal God and Devil, their real Hell and Heaven, and every man will proceed to do that which is right in the sight of his own eyes. From Aristotle to Jowett, and certain of our own “great men,” we have had thinkers and rulers who urged us to maintain the hypocrisy of joining in the public worship of the gods of the masses, although their creeds, hymns and prayers were merely grave clothes of once living faiths.

It is a question whether the churches are helped by the lukewarm adherence of such mentors. Rabbi Wise remarked when his son left the Jewish faith: “I sometimes think that all churches, including my own, are more hurt by them that in spirit abjure the faith and in name remain within the fold than by those who honestly find it impossible to continue their creedal affirmations and make no concealment of this difficulty.”

Theology may not be all of religion, but there is a minimum of theology without which every organized religion falls to the ground and becomes mere child's play. Christians believe in a God with whom men commune directly, who answers petitions, forgives sins, and assures them of heaven. We have good reason to believe God is such a being, or we have not; if we have not, we are wasting time, money and emo-

tion in the forms of worship that assert his existence. This is plain common sense. If there were no churches, the people who have outgrown the old theologies would be the last to call for their re-establishment.

The church is a going concern, of vast power for good. Why leave this powerful agency of altruism and spiritual consolation to fossils and fanatics? The church is changing; even its theology takes on new forms, obedient to the spirit of the times. Let us reform the church from within and not rob simple souls of their faith by a general secession of enlightened men and women from the churches. So runs many an argument by worthy men with worthy motives. I honor their optimism, but is there so much light in the world that we must let it into our institutions gradually? When a new comet is discovered we announce the fact at once, and would do so, I suppose, even if it were headed directly for the Earth, dooming us to destruction. In science and business we are looking for facts not fancies, and when we find them we publish them. Everywhere but in matters that affect traditional religion. Here the tabu stands; we are on holy ground and must not meddle lightly with sacred formulas established once for all by the fathers of the church. Worshippers of words!

If things were going very well with the world, there might be some dalliance with this view, but things are going rather ill. If there is a remedy in frankness, let us try it. Truth, openly professed, is an old remedy. If all the leaders of thought who sub-

scribe in their hearts to the view of God given in these pages would make no secret of their opinions, there would be a cleansing of thought that would clarify the issues the befog the public mind about God and religion. "The good is the great enemy of the best", and the best is none too good for a tottering civilization.

### THE "HUMAN GOD"

The "social theologians" deny the personality of God and worship Humanity. Professor E. S. Ames, of the University of Chicago, likewise pastor of the University Church of the Disciples, says:

"My idea of God is the personified, idealized, whole of reality.—My idea of God is analogous to my idea of my Alma Mater—My idea of Uncle Sam is of the same character—the personified reality known also as The United States of America—In similar fashion God is the personified reality of the world."

This reduces God to an empty fiction, if by God you mean a really existent divine person. Ames says that his God is "the common will, the spirit of mankind."

Doctor John H. Dietrich, eminent Modernist preacher, says, under the title, *The Human God*, "The figure of the Christian God, like that of the rest, is the product of the imagination. He is also a metaphor, to be taken figuratively, not literally." These thinkers believe in the metaphysical God, but they do not worship It. The "whole of reality", the "Ultimate Being"

is the real God of these men, but only as a matter of logic, not for purposes of religious worship. Dietrich says, that the Humanistic idea of God "does not confine the deity by any means to the spirit of Humanity—but for all practical purposes it centers it in Humanity."

It is one of the ironies of history that these men insist upon calling themselves Christians and include in their worship much of the old ritual. Their religion is of course much like that of Christ, but that is indeed a poor reason for calling themselves Christians. By a sort of spiritual *coup d'état* they have captured and hold a few Christian churches, but they are really the apostles of a new religion, or is it only Auguste Comte's Humanism revived?

But they are intellectually honest, and they are quite right about the nature of the real God. It is "the whole of reality regarded as divine", not a person. Yet why call Humanity God? Why play with fictions? Why so little emphasis on the many sided revelation of God in Nature? Why so blind an eye to the supreme inspiration of worshipping the All that is in all? These men lack the mystic faculty, but they do not lack religion. Like the rest of us they proclaim the idea of God that "saves" them. Thus Dietrich says, "And though it be but another idol, I set it up as the concept of God which best meets my needs."

To Ames, Dietrich, and similar thinkers, "God" is merely a time-honored word used to sum up the drawing power of an ideal of social virtue. Their



working conception of God is merely a projection into the future of Man as he shall become when he attains perfection. Such is the conception of Professor Overstreet:

“It is accordingly this ‘large figure’, not simply of human, but of cosmic society which is to yield our God of the future. There is no place in the figure for an eternally perfect being.—It is the large figure out of which is projected the conception of the God that is ourselves, in whom and of whom we literally are; the God that in every act and intention we, with our countless fellows, are realizing.—A god, in short, that *is* the world in the unity of its mass life—a God growing with the world.”

To leave out the “eternally perfect being” and call the idea of perfected human society “God” seems to me little more than a sap thrown to the orthodox, a polite confession of atheism, or, more kindly, a helpless surrender to the inadequacies of language. I would not impugn the piety of these thinkers; they are religious and they are pioneers of the light; I believe all they believe—and more. If one had to choose between the exclusive worship of the Absolute Mystery and the exclusive worship of Humanity, he would do well to cling to Man, but (to me) Man is not all of God, nor the worship of Humanity all of religion.

The human race is doubtless fascinating, but also disappointing. Who would willingly die for it unless he believed at heart that the will of the Eternal lay behind its seeming futilities? Humanity inspires some

men to high deeds of self-sacrifice; but a race without a Maker is after all only the useless spawn of matter. Why die for it? If there is no God for Man, it seems trifling to exalt Humanity into one. Nature animated by an invisible Mystery and Man conscious of the Infinite within him seem to me the only adequate basis for a faith and hope that deserve the name religion.

The choice of most worshippers of God will fall upon either the God of philosophy or the God of the religions. To worship a fictitious personal God is to end by emasculating religion of its most powerful motive force—the belief that its God really exists independently of human ideas. Modernist attempts to unite two gods in one worship are merely the agonies of a transition period when men still cling to the dear imagery of childhood and worship the tombs of dead gods. The unjust jest aimed at Santayana, characterized as “a man who believes there is no God and that Mary is his Mother,” justly applies to those who deny the existence of a personal God yet persist in the pantomimic worship of one.

### SYNESIUS OF CYRENE

Sometimes we see these matters more clearly at a distance. There was one Synesius of Cyrene, who flourished at the end of the fourth century of our era in the splendid city of Cyrene, six hundred miles west of Alexandria. He was a man of parts, a philosopher dwelling in a land where “one never hears a man uttering a philosophic phrase, except when an echo is repeating his own voice.”

Reluctantly he accepted the bishopric of Ptolemais, imposing these terms on the archbishop who appointed him:

"It is difficult, if not quite impossible, that convictions should be shaken which have entered the soul through knowledge to the point of demonstration. Now you know that philosophy rejects many of the convictions which are cherished by the common people. For my own part I can never persuade myself that the soul is of more recent origin than the body. Never would I admit that the world and the parts which make it up must perish. The resurrection, which is an object of common belief, is nothing for me but a sacred and mysterious allegory, and I am far from sharing the views of the vulgar crowd thereon. The philosophic mind, albeit the discerner of truth, admits the employment of falsehood, for light is to truth what the eye is to the mind. Just as the eye would be injured by an excess of light, and just as darkness is more helpful to those of weak eyesight, even so do I consider that the false may be beneficial to the populace, and the truth injurious to those not strong enough to gaze steadfastly on the radiance of real being. If the laws of the priesthood that obtain with us permit these views to me, I can take over the holy office on the condition that I may prosecute philosophy at home and spread legends abroad, so that if I teach no doctrine, at all events I undo no teaching, and allow men to remain in their already acquired convictions."

Possibly Synesius chose wisely in a land where there were so few who held his views. His modern successors who fill many a pulpit in America are otherwise situated. They lack the intellectual sincerity of a Synesius to call their teachings "falsehood," while their insincerity is apparent to thousands both within and without the churches.

Men honestly differ about this policy; I merely voice the opinion of many who believe it would be an excellent thing if the leaders of thought would give up participation in this make-believe worship. It would be a spectacle that would endure in history if these modern idol worshippers would step to the front and declare, "There is no God but God." All of Nature is the voice of that God and human minds are all the "mind" there is in God. Why not stop uttering vain incantations to a silent, unresponsive Monarch, who leaves us to fight our own battles? Especially when we do not believe he really exists. One God is enough, if He is the Great God, the Supreme Mystery.

## CHAPTER VI

## NATURALISM AND GOD

*"Earth's crammed with Heaven  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes."*

MRS. BROWNING.

## THE WORLD SPIRIT

Astronomy and physics lead us back to a Supreme Mystery which we have called God, but it is a far away God. After all, we live not among electrons, but in the world of big, brute facts-stones, sticks stars and men. Is God discernible in the visible world of Nature? Naturalism says, No; the "seers" say, Yes.

I agree with the Naturalists that we do not find a personal God in Nature, but I seem to find there what the seers sing. I wrote this book while looking out on the widest stretch of wind-swept ocean that man can face. Like a half-bent bow an irridescent bay spreads over seven miles of rainbow sea from the million year old crater of Diamond Head to the bold dome of Koko Head. Beyond the stretch of placid water runs a broad coral reef, along whose border the billows never cease their monotonous attack. The beauty, the loneliness and the companionship of Nature at her best have often been mine as I counted the stars, welcomed the good, clean sun, or wished the tropic moon good-night. Behind me lay the mid-Pacific Babylon of business and

buffoonery, while around me, above me and in me breathed what men called "God," to me the Ineffable Mystery.

Certain great poets, notably Wordsworth, and many of lesser fame, have similarly fancied that the near vision of Nature brings us face to face with a spirit kindred to ours; if not God, at least an overwhelming intimation of God. Thus Wordsworth:

"Of something far more deeply interfused  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.  
And the round ocean and the living air  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts  
And rolls through all things."

### DO WE IMPOSE GOD ON NATURE?

If God is not a person, we can hardly infer that the harmony, beauty and joy that Nature seems to reflect are whispers to us from a spirit like ours. Men we know from their movements, but Nature's gestures are not as ours. Much of Nature seems a vast, wasteful, chaotic surging to and fro of masses of mere matter. Much, some say all, of Nature is monotonously indifferent to our spiritual aspirations. The language of Nature is not that of a Great Person, except in the illusions of poetry. She speaks only when we speak first, too often in tones that crash and groan, with gestures that might mean anything or nothing. If power, beauty and goodness are in Nature, they are

not there as they are in us. Talk of "communing with God in Nature" may be good poetry, but perhaps it is bad metaphysics. In Nature, it may be urged, we find—just Nature, plus a silent invisible Mystery.

If some poets show us "Nature's God", others, as great, sing scornfully of her barrenness, like Matthew Arnold in *Dover Beach*:

"For the world, which seems,  
To lie before us like a land of dreams  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, no rlove, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

Even to the poet-worshipper of nature, only certain rare aspects of Nature appear spiritual. The stars, the rising and setting sun, flowers, mountains and the changeful sea, at their best, stir in us only vague surmisings, indefinable joys. If we did not bring God to Nature, would it ever reveal him in sky, bud, or bird? Shadowy suggestions of truth and beauty are there, but our ideals do not live in Nature as they do in us.

Yet certain aspects of Nature are tremendously congenial to us, and so far as this is true she becomes our home and not a mere darkling plain. Literally she is our Mother. It would be strange if there were not some truth in the vision of Nature that finds in it an answer to our spiritual ideals, even a vision of God.

## THE GODLESS VIEW OF NATURE

Naturalism sees these things otherwise. It declares that man uses Nature as a mirror of his own incorrigible egotism, forever seeking justification of his private hopes. Really, it is said, there is neither beauty nor goodness in Nature. Wherever we look, at the stones or the stars, we get merely heat, light, sound and mathematics, all of them reducible in the end to electricity. The latest pronouncement (Crile) is that man himself is an electric battery, the brain the positive pole, the liver the negative. Tint of flower and song of bird are so many vibrations of light or air waves a second; we but listen to our own voices when we call Nature the voice of God.

So with the harmony of Nature. All things move according to law, but law is a name for the nameless necessity of Nature. In Nature there are but motions of insensate atoms dashing about with endless collisions, vain shootings of comets through space, rocks reared to decay, life dissolving in death.

There is method in Nature's madness, but it is madness still. If we listen to *all* the music of the spheres, we shall find that much of it is cacophonous; if we consider *all* the handiwork of Nature, we shall see that the beauty and harmony we find are stray flowers in an infinite morass. Cosmic life is to most scientists a blind urge, achieving one success in a million efforts. The earth is paved with seed that never germinated, dotted with the skeletons of animals that



lived just long enough to die. Thousands of species, we are told, perished in the making for each that survived. If all this clumsy activity speaks of a Creator, his power must be limited, his intelligence clouded, and his successes few.

### A GRAVEYARD OF HOPES

If one really believes he lives in a world of this sort he should feel nothing but contempt for it, cherishing high thoughts, but not high hopes. This philosophy of fearless despair is powerfully and poignantly stated by Bertrand Russell:

“Brief and powerless is man’s life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish the lofty thoughts that enoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of fate, to worship at the shrine his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life, despite the trampling march of unconscious power.”

Observe the Trinity of the atheist—“omnipotent matter”, “the empire of chance”, and “unconscious power”. After all, Russell, it appears, believes there is a cosmic order omnipotent in its sway. What is omnipotent cannot be fundamentally “chance”, else

its omnipotence would be imperilled. It is an "empire", not a chaos. That it is "unconscious" need not worry us, unless we foolishly assume that the unconscious cannot accomplish what the conscious can. But it *does* do that and more. So impossible is it for the atheist to declare his unbelief without asserting the profoundest of faiths.

Much may be hoped from such a cosmic order as Russell paints, even that it may mend its ways and treat us better tomorrow. One need not feel that he must choose between the unyielding despair of Russell and a childish faith that we shall all be saved for a blessed immortality. There is room for hope and a good life between these extremes as John Dewey has pointed out in a passage which might well have written as a direct reply to Russell:

"Men move between extremes. They conceive of themselves as little gods, or feign a powerful and cunning God as their ally, who bends the world to do their bidding and meet their wishes. Disillusionized, they disown the world that disappoints them; and, hugging ideals to themselves as their own possessions, stand in haughty aloofness apart from the hard course of events that pays so little heed to our hopes and aspirations. But a mind that has opened itself to experience and that has ripened through its discipline knows its own littlenesses and impotencies; it knows that its wishes and acknowledgments are not the final measures of the Universe, whether in knowledge or conduct, and hence are in the end transient. But it

also knows that its juvenile assumption of power and achievement is not a dream to be wholly forgotten. It implies a unity with the Universe that is to be preserved. The belief, and the effort of thought and struggle which it inspires, are also the doing of the Universe, and they in some way, however slight, carry the Universe forward. A chastened sense of our importance, apprehension that it is not a yard-stick by which to measure the whole, is consistent with a belief that we and our endeavors are significant not only in themselves but in the whole."

### IDEALS AS REAL AS ATOMS

When physics and chemistry have done their worst Man is still left, at the end as at the beginning, Nature's chief enigma. Are his ideals of truth, beauty and goodness proven baseless dreams merely because they cannot be read in the dust at his feet? We can pursue these ideals whether Nature reveals God or not, but like white mice in a treadmill. To say that our ideals are not in Nature is merely to say they are not all of Nature. If we are one with Nature, they are one with it.

We can conceive of a world, conceive, not picture, which would be totally barren of response to our ideals. A man locked in an empty dry goods box has no visions of "the presences of Nature". The world might have been a prison cell, with no window looking out on beauty and truth, but it is not that. The significant fact is that vibrations of light waves are transformed

into beauty, mountains into majesty, rivers into romance. Nature tells many lies but perhaps she speaks truly in these moods that she excites in men at their best. Which is the more reasonable belief—that our ideals are hopeless or realizable? Logic has no final answer; either may be true, but the latter belief *ought* to be true; we are free to accept it and the better for believing it.

### PROGRESS AND HOPE

Man has immensely enlarged the number and scope of his values since he scratched pictures of elk and mammoth on the walls of the stone age caves. Art, science, philosophy, and religion, may seem small in achieved conquests but the conquests have been real and are proceeding at an immensely accelerating rate. In the last century Man has extracted more values and more value from his universe than in all his preceding history of five thousand centuries.

No one can set a limit to the ratio of acceleration with which the rational and mechanical, moral and aesthetic, conquest of reality may increase. Multiply our progress by the next million years, add conceivably new powers evolved from the human mind, and you get a picture that suggests an indefinite expansion of values from much of the Universe that now seems barren and useless. Coal was mere dirt for ages; the winds blew unharnessed; rivers flowed uselessly to the sea; men lived only to eat and sleep, with brief intervals of procreation and fighting. We have come a

long way, in a long time, it is true, but the progress is sufficient to give us strong hope that our efforts to spell out values have not been in vain.

But it will all end in a grand smash up; man, the world and human values will all disintegrate into cosmic mist, says Russell. Perhaps so, but not certainly. Russell elsewhere clearly shows that future expectations based on a narrow experience of certain uniformities of Nature in the past have no logical value. That human spirits will survive the final dissipation of our earth is of course a chimerical hope as far as science is concerned, but, then, the expectation that there will be untold millions of years hence just the sort of solar destruction that Mr. Russell bewails is as uncertain as the hope of immortality. There is every reason to think the Universe will survive. Even if the solar system is wiped out, it may reappear in other forms. It is far from certain that our labors shall have been in vain; we may be immortal.

### THE VALUE OF VALUES

Our values are the only ones we know. They may be of the very essence of reality. Is it not saner to take them as such than to lie down paralyzed by their seeming uselessness measured quantitatively against the blind forces of huge cosmic changes? Mere quantity of matter may really be insignificant. The waste of cosmic substance and power is perhaps purely a human fancy, based on our mean necessity of husbanding our limited resources. God is not so poor as we. I speak in metaphors, but if He wished to erect

a lavish background for what seems a petty play by obscure actors perhaps that signifies that the play is more important than the scenery. Such reversals of human estimates have been the rule rather than the exception.

The values that are eternal must be inferred from the values we know. The immeasurable amount of valueless matter need not discredit such values as we find; a diamond is still a diamond, though it be the only one in a mountain of clay. It yet remains to be proved that matter may not perish and ideals survive. Perhaps the meaningless part of the Universe will shrink some day, like a punctured balloon, and what we feared were only bubbles on our globe, the "accidental collocations of atoms" that constitute its contemptible human motes, may turn out to be the only worth while things in the Universe, except God himself.

A striking prophecy of the passing of matter is made by Prof. A. N. Whitehead in his recent book, *Religion in the Making*:

"The Universe shows us two aspects; on the one side it is physically wasting, on the other side it is spiritually ascending. It is thus passing with a slowness inconceivable in our measures of time to new creative conditions, amid which the physical world, as we at present know it, will be represented by a ripple barely to be distinguished from non-entity. The present type of order in the world has arisen from an unimaginable past, and it will find its grave in an un-

imaginable future. There remain the inexhaustible realm of abstract forms, and creativity, with its shifting character, ever determined afresh by its own creatures, and God, upon whose wisdom all forms of order depend."

If one will speculate, this is a more likely speculation than the purely gratuitous one that the values we have found are cancelled by the valuelessness of what we have not yet explored. Deserts have yielded dates before this and it is much too early in the history of the race to set a limit to the meaning and value we may yet find in much which now seems mere "cosmic weather."

No ingenuity of metaphysics can make a mathematical demonstration of the ultimate exit of man from the abyss of the valueless. John Dewey says such hopes are "fantastic." Russell counsels us to "unyielding despair." In a way it is a long leap in the dark when one ventures the assertion that his values are among those for which the Universe is striving. In point of the petty goals at which we aim, they are, of course, not such, but in the contribution which they make to the current of progress within the Whole they may have eternal significance.

To believe this is to take a leap along a path which is illuminated for a certain distance by the only search light we have. We need not believe that our values of truth, beauty, and goodness are infallibly realized on earth; nothing is more certain than that they are not. They are precarious, half grasped, and never quite

satisfactory, but it is a fair belief that they generate their completions in the ideal. Perhaps there is nothing at the end of the road exactly corresponding to these ideals. Values may always be for us partial, progressive, changing, yet so long as they draw us onward we may think of them as more than we are, even as eternal. This is not knowledge; it is not proof, but it is the only answer that saves the values of life for us. The assurance that the adoption of such a view gives is wholly alogical; it is a genuine experience, self-validating and satisfying. This is the core of religion—the experience of values, not the logical demonstration of them.

That the belief in the eternal value of our ideals is a will-o'-the-wisp of deluded egotism is thinkable, but no one is compelled to cherish this doubt. The voice of hope is to be trusted till proven illusory. Experience gives us values that we are willing to live and die for. What more would you have? If we can live more richly and die better contented believing we have built imperishably, why not do so? While our goals beckon forward it is reasonable to take them at their face value as a priceless reward which justifies our struggles.

### THE FAITH OF A DOUBTER

This hope lies dormant in the heart of the most ruthless doubter. The notorious and much maligned infidel, Robert C. Ingersoll, often declared his belief



that death ended all, yet looking into the face of his dead brother he gave voice to this hope at the edge of the grave:

“Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud and the only answer is the echo of a wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing. He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest breath, ‘I am better now.’ Let us believe, in spite of doubts and dogmas and tears and fears, that these dear words are true of all the countless dead.”

A faith that is worth while at the grave is better worth our while in life. Nature everywhere shows us life ending in death-everywhere but in the eternal hope that refuses to die from the heart of man. And man is of nature; the only personal God that Nature reveals is the God that dwells in us, but that God is adequate to life. As Robert E. Lee said, “Human virtue should be equal to human calamity.” If one can do no better, he may at least strive till he is weary and then lie down,

“With the half of a broken hope a pillow at night  
That somehow the right is the right  
And the smooth shall bloom from the rough.”

—STEVENSON.

## CHAPTER VII.

## IS GOD GOOD?

*"Either God is unwilling to abolish evil, or he is unable; if he is unwilling, he is not good; if he is unable, he is not omnipotent."* —ST. AUGUSTINE.

If good and evil mean in God what they mean to us, we must accept either a bad omnipotent God, or a good but sadly limited God. That which limits God must be greater than God; hence the principle of evil is the true God. This very excellent logic, of its kind, has given us devil worshippers on the one hand and atheists on the other. What guarantee have we that we are not pawns in a game whose rules and issues we cannot guess? This dispiriting belief is rampant to-day. No one has stated it more pungently than Bertrand Russell:

"To Dr. Faustus in his study Mephistopheles told the history of Creation, saying, 'The endless praises of the choirs of angels began to grow wearisome, for after all did he not deserve their praise? Had He not given them endless joy? Would it not be more amusing to obtain undeserved praise, to be worshipped by beings that He tortured? He smiled inwardly and resolved that the great drama should be performed.

For countless ages the hot nebula whirled aimlessly through space—And (man) gave God thanks for the strength that enabled him to forego even the joys that were possible. And God smiled; and when

He saw that Man had become perfect in renunciation and worship, he sent another sun into the sky, which crashed into man's sun, and all returned again to nebula.

'Yes,' he murmured, 'It was a good play; I will have it performed again.' "

There is no escape from the condemnation of "God," if we follow this graphic picture in representing God as a person for whom good and evil have essentially the same meaning as for us. And if good and evil are swallowed up in some unknown synthesis, the personal God disappears with the disappearance of these personal human judgments.

With the New England Primer we may vindicate God, if we can, by saying, "In Adam's fall we sinned all." Or with certain softer theologians of today we may declare evil is non-existent, "mortal illusion." Consider the following "illusion." An immense shell burst in the center of a room during the Great War. A fraction of a second later there were a few faint and ragged stains on the stone walls of the room in place of the score of men who had just breathed and dreamed there. Can a reasoning being believe that the full responsibility for this and ten thousand similar horrors belongs to the misguided sons of Adam who began and prosecuted the Great War? Which is the more probable illusion, the "unreality" of the mangled bodies of the obliterated men or the "reality" of a Good Person who so misused his power?

## IS GOD GOOD?

There are trivial evils, a thorn with the rose, that hardly mar perfection, may even add zest to life. It is often contended that even the major evils are a necessary discipline for our souls. But when the thorn carries deadly infection that cuts off splendid youth, or a jibe drives an innocent girl to suicide, we face not a theory of character building but an indictment of the God of the religions. What sort of a world is this where men call upon God to guide their consecrated good will, then plunge into vice and crime while that silent God looks on?

Why not admit such facts are irreconcilable with the conception of a God whose, justice, sympathy and love are akin to ours? We *know* they are, and when we say, "God's ways are not as our ways" we do not justify our personal God; we deny the being of such a God. No man could do what God is alleged to do and survive our scorn; we would repudiate him instantly. No man ever was or could be as bad as a God who is an omnipotent person with a morality akin to ours. If God is "good," in our sense, he is not God.

An evangelist who boasted of a Ph.D. and agreement with the theology of W. J. Bryan recently prophesied that the crater of Diamond Head would vomit vengeance upon the wicked city of Honolulu, whose people shunned the Tabernacle where he held forth, and whose preachers, in some cases, believed in evolution. The Paradise of the Pacific remains un-

scathed, but, strangely enough, some months later, the Volcano of Mauna Loa overwhelmed with a stream of lava a peaceful village of Hawaiian fishermen who had never heard of the theory of evolution. Servants of God who so falsely construe his plans may even be mistaken about his nature.

Who crushed, drowned, burned and buried 400,000 men women and children in the cataclysm of the Tokio earthquake? A God who plans as we plan, wills the good and cannot achieve it, or a God whose good is our evil? Is God good but weak? Or are there two gods, one holy, the other devilish?

### THE CHALLENGE OF EVIL

All apologies for a personal God fail; He is the all-embracing, or he is, together with Man, the victim of the evil he did not create and cannot control. He either wrote the play and is responsible for its mistakes, or he sits among the spectators, as powerless as they. This God who is so seemingly indifferent to the pain, evil and sin that curse man is surely falsified in the poetic imagery of the conventional hymn and prayer. The imaginary Santa Claus is a good, honest, old fellow, a worthy image of what a real Santa Claus should be. Not so the picture of God as King, Judge, or Father. As King, He is king of evil as well as good, evil vastly more rampant today than when the race was born. As Judge, He condemns the work of his own hands, and as Father, if He is the author of evil, He should hide his face with shame.

The world we invent this God to explain is an alien world to the wholly beneficent Spirit we paint in our orthodox worship. It is an unruly, unruled, steed, ill born, half broken, an outlaw of a world, a disgrace to the sort of Maker Man in his futility has erected above it. We cannot change the world, nor abolish evil by denying its existence, but we can change our idea of God, and by tens of thousands we are doing it today.

Man's ability to look himself in the face without a smile while, after three thousand years of science and philosophy, he continues to worship as God a stuffed image of himself is the supreme miracle of history. That man should burn with ideals of righteousness, love and mercy is so far forth a sign that at bottom the Universe is right, whatever Right may turn out to be, but to make the triumph of right turn on the whims of a Personal Creator of evil is to destroy the faith of millions who refuse to be blind to the facts.

### APOLOGIES FOR GOD

Read the labored and casuistic explanations of the theologians. You get excuses, palliations, evasions. But evil is not explained or explained away by proving there is less evil in the world than good. This might stand to the credit of a finite God, like the Invisible King, of H. G. Wells, but the least stain of evil in this world vitiates the character of an Infinite God, conceived as a good person.

Men are responsible for the evil they do, not God, it is urged. This is the very question at issue. Hered-

ity and environment being what they are, an unkind burden is laid upon human responsibility. Even if we are free we are not omniscient. Evil is not eternal, it is argued; in comparison with an eternity of good to come present evils are as nothing. Suppose this to be true; it is a mere mathematical sophistry. In comparison with infinite wealth a million dollars is infinitely small, but we live not by such comparisons but by the measure of our present poverty. Who felt most deeply the challenge of the problem of evil? Was it not He who cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Viewed from any angle of human ideals of good, this world seems a sorry scheme of things. If God is a person, we shall say with Omar:

"Oh, Thou, who Man of baser earth didst make  
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake;  
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give-and take!"

To place between us and the Silent One a magnified Man, who is neither a good man nor the Great God, but a childish and sacrilegious jumble of the two, gives us a God that is merely a personified mixture of all the good and evil we seek to explain. If we would justify God, let us not invoke a conception of Him that is an exaggerated picture of our own limitations.

### "BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL"

Good and evil are what they are because God is what He is, and for that very reason He does not par-

ticipate in them as Man does. Man is evil, let us say, because he is finite, matter bound, undeveloped, whence flow error, delusions and degeneracies. Goodness, for Man, is triumph over evil. Evil is negative, destructive, degrading; therefore it cannot be characteristic of the Supreme Being. Inconsistency and internal negation in the Infinite would mean self-destruction. God needs no triumph over evil, because he is not thwarted by it. Therefore goodness is not a term to apply to God. The Divider between good and evil is naturally above their control.

Words limp here; we are speaking of a truth of which we are sure, yet which is beyond comprehension. Santayana expresses in a measure what I would say:

"There is Infinite Being, no doubt, beyond our human interests and ideals, and, to the contemplative intellect, that Being has a certain dignity because it is great; but its greatness is not moral, its dignity is not human, and to call it 'good' would not be a 'higher truth' but a silly impertinence. The Infinite knows no obligation; it is subject to no standard."

Prof. A. N. Whitehead, in *Religion in the Making*, says to the same effect:

"Its incompletion and evil show that the temporal world is to be construed in terms of additional formative elements which are not definable in the terms which are applicable to God."

The moment we ask if God is "good" we tacitly assume He is a person, a member of a social community. All this question can really mean is, Is the



Universe so constituted that it is a promising field for the pursuit of what we term human good? If we believe it is, we may say, speaking figuratively, God is good.

### IS EVOLUTION PROGRESS?

Let it be granted that we are the most complex of living organisms, the last and best order of beings produced on earth, judged by our ability to master Nature. We crown the hierarchy of the living, ourselves being the judges. We can trace life from its primitive beginnings in the slime of the ancient sea-beaches, through nascent consciousness, up to the philosophic mind that tries to analyze the Universe and sit in judgment on God. We call it ascent; there is no one to contradict us. Looking backward we seem to represent the consummation of an upward progress through millions of lower forms of life and mind. Volumes have been written along this line to justify our hopes.

Always however, we must face the fact that the only good ends we know to be capable of achievement are the partially realized, immediate goods that we snatch from the hands of a jealous destiny. Considering the infinite variety of contradictory goods that man has pursued, we must admit that the faith that evolution is leading us to a definite, higher and eternal goal needs a firmer basis than the fact that we are the last and possibly the best of the series of animal species that Nature has pyramided on the earth.

## CONSCIENCE AND GOD

Is conscience the "voice of God" that solves the riddle? Conscience and duty are now usually explained by sociologists as the result of social evolution. Duty is custom sanctified by time, and conscience a lively fear of disgrace, or as lively a hope of approbation. Is it altogether so? Of course we can hardly think today that conscience was born in the Garden of Eden and duty fully expressed in the ten commandments. Duties, we shall grant, sprang out of the necessities of the primitive family and were gradually given a "divine" sanction by the force of tribal custom. Filial piety, patriotism, even religion, have been convincingly shown to have developed out of successive impositions on the will of the individual of the will of parents, the community, or its rulers.

Nothing else will explain the thousands of variations on the theme of the good. The good of yesterday becomes the evil of today and vice versa. Witness slavery, birth control, divorce, piracy and a thousand other practices, now deemed good and now evil as times and customs change. Opinions on these issues are not born with us, nor provided for on tables of stone.

So plausible is it to maintain that religion is a social growth that a strong school of Modernist theologians in America hold that religion consists solely in the performance of social duties. Says Professor E. S. Ames, "To be anti-social is far deeper heresy than

to be atheistic with reference to the Determiner of Dstiny as often conceived."

No doubt there is much truth in this view, Morals are unquestionably a social development; the commands of the gods follow upon the preferences of men. Conscience, as a matter of common observation, is mostly expectation of social approval or disapproval. Neither Robinson Crusoe nor God could be subject to the host of social imperatives that call for life and death adherence from socialized beings.

But is this absolutely all there is to conscience and duty? Can the Almighty State be safely substituted for Almighty God? Something more than multiplying selfish egotism by a million must happen before I shall recognize the commands of the crowd as duty to be done for its own sake, whether it profit me or not.

The highest conduct, the unselfish and unconstrained devotion that the world has most acclaimed, always implies a faith that one is responding to a law of value and duty that roots far deeper than the superficial give and take of human society. I do not speak of "a command from on high." That would be merely to substitute a superstition for a fact. Rather, let us say, conscience and duty at their best mean that one believes that the duty to sacrifice himself is motivated by something deeper than selfish interests and higher than social standards. Wherever conscience is not a keen sense of the expedient, it is taken by us as in the deepest sense "the voice of God," whatever be our God. The discovery of the specific duty is of course to

be made by the path of scientific ethics, or the guess work of common sense; there is no oracular voice to whisper the right choice to us. All of which proves nothing but that life looks as though it might really have meaning and that in striving for ideals above crowd made standards we are not throwing ourselves away on vain hopes.

Explain conscience as we please, there is always left, for some of us, an unexplained margin, and it is the "imponderables" that count most in life, as Bismarck well said. No matter what the biological and social history of the origin and growth of conscience and duty, there is for some minds a final note of authority there that we must refer back to the Supreme Mystery.

No doubt one can ignore this intimation; some do not feel it; many do not wish to feel it, but men and women abound who regardless of custom, law, and self-interest would gladly lay down their lives at the call of duty. That is perhaps enough to establish the faith that there is more than habit, shame, or crowd sanctions behind their devotion. How often have not men gone full in the face of custom, precedent, tradition and law for the sake of allegiance to that far off good that it is the privilege of each to define for himself as the will of God. No doubt it is an assumption that we are in the service of such a Will, a still greater one that in any given case we interpret that Will aright, but in a world where all beyond immediate sensations is based on assumptions the part of wisdom is to follow

the assumptions that appear most rational and fill life with the greatest worth.

The Good, then, is an ideal of perfected character, to be progressively defined. It is a faith that for the Race, if not for us, for the Universe, if not for the Race, for God, if not for the Universe, our will to the good is not in vain.

This is not certainty; it is hope, the essence of religion as an active motive. It does not explain evil, or justify God; our business is not to justify God, but to acknowledge Him, each in his own fashion. His inaccessible Mystery is the very reason why it is possible to believe that the strife of good and evil in us reflects a perfect harmony in Him.

Duties may be of one race or one time only, ill chosen, misdirected, but the ideal that there is a best way and that it must be followed at any cost is the perennial assertion of our Nature. Such a conception is prophetic and creative; at its best it is thoroughly unselfish and projects itself into an illimitable future. It is the best that is within us. Belief in it is the ground as well as the result of the belief in the Supreme Mystery. Yielding to the grip of this ideal Good we find that it fills life with a strenuous joy to pursue it. That is The Good for us. Will it make us happy? Does it promise immortality? Who knows? It is the best way, which is enough. To conclude on the contrary that the Universe is bad, or simply meaningless, is to make a baseless assumption, and, in addition, it is deliberately to choose to be miserable.

The demand for the goodness of God, in the sense in which we have explained it, is as great as the demand for his existence. What it lacks by way of demonstrative proof it gains by way of an affirmation of which we can say that it has an eternal ring about it. If anything is the "real thing", this is; for it bids us bend the earth and time to its will.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CAN MAN KNOW GOD?

*"I saw God. Do you doubt it?*

*Do you dare to doubt it?*

*I saw the Almighty Man. His hand*

*Was resting on a mountain, and*

*He looked upon the world and all about it;*

*I saw him, plainer than you see me now;*

*You must n't doubt it."*

—JAMES STEPHENS.

## NATURALISM AND SUPERNATURALISM

It is in the air of our day that we are all earth-born; we started from the soil; we did not descend from Heaven. This faith (for after all it is faith, not knowledge) is held not only by professional agnostics and materialists, but by many, if not most, of the younger college graduates. It is penetrating even to the back country of the farm and fisher folk. Tennessee and Mississippi grasp the vital issue between science and religion better than the easy going scientist-theologians who cry out "There is no conflict between science and religion." There is conflict to the death between science and orthodoxy at least.

Of course the Creator could have slipped the immortal soul into our ape like ancestor, whence it made its crooked way to the heights of modern enlightenment. The invisible atom called the soul may always

be made by the path of scientific ethics, or the guess work of common sense; there is no oracular voice to whisper the right choice to us. All of which proves nothing but that life looks as though it might really have meaning and that in striving for ideals above crowd made standards we are not throwing ourselves away on vain hopes.

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have been the same in all men, be they cave dwellers or cardinals; the difference may have been only in the windows through which it surveyed the world, beclouded with mud in the ape days, later washed transparent by science and revelation.

But the swing of thought is the other way. Faith in the supernatural, heaven-born soul is now in leading intellectual circles regarded as the shibboleth of a decadent creed. Western intellectuals, as a class, believe they began on earth, where they complete their brief cycle without the intervention of God or angels. Slowly and painfully wrought out of a clay that now figures as electrically driven electrons, man has made of "energy" an eviscerated Creator that spat him out as a passing spark from the clash of insensate atoms. All is growth, change, decay; all is of the earth and vainly returns to earth. This is Naturalism.

Logically, there is no necessary conflict between science and religion. Without disturbing the natural order of events, all the gifts of God may still be conceived as dropping from Heaven upon the "lumps of water and impure carbons" that we are and informing them with "eternal ideas." To Naturalism, however, this theory seems superfluous. It is simpler and more scientific to read mind as a genetic growth, a biological mechanism, the sum of the "behavior responses" of a perplexed organism finding its way through a hostile environment.

Given a lump of clay blossoming instantaneously into an Adam, with an Eve clipped from his superflu-

ous rib, and there is but one answer to the question of the origin of Man—a God created him, and, obeying Him, we shall flourish here and hereafter. But if mind and life “just grew” by gradual composition of molecules in motion, a Creator is an impertinence; at best He recedes into the background as an impersonal energy.

The conflict between science and religion will never be settled on the lines of this old antithesis. If the choice lies between Nature as we find her, the competent, if laborious, fashioner of Man, and a Supernatural Creator, miraculously joining an ethereal soul to alien clay, most of us will stick to Nature. The modern mind is ruled by efficiency in logic as well as in business. It advances not by multiplying hypotheses, but by rejecting far fetched explanations, and to Naturalism the orthodox God and the angelic soul are such. No doubt, it reasons, we are ignorant of Nature’s method of originating life and mind, but tomorrow we may discern it. We have already traced life back to a bit of protoplasm, which is a more promising problem to analyze than a personal Creator. Man certainly looks skyward, but it is an afterthought; his feet are planted on the earth, and if leisure from grubbing gives him time to look up, it is only to betray his earthly origin by imagining he descended from from the Highest.

### THE MODERNIST SOLUTION

To ask thinkers that see Man and Nature in this

light whether Man can know God by direct intuition is idle. Their answer is, "No, there is no such God to know." Modernists in religion agree to this for the most part, but they would animate the energy of science with a Spirit, which is, after all, Paley's old Designer. Life and mind, they admit, are natural growths, but the creative force that juggled them into existence through aeons of gradual evolution is also "creative spirit"—is God, and the soul with its inheritance of freedom and immortality is after all Heaven born and only incidentally of earth.

This procedure is of course a complete "reconciliation" of science with religion; God and all the "eternal values" troop stealthily back into our evolved mind. Man has gradually discovered himself to be "mind in the making," but the maker is still behind the scene.

Naturalism insists that the taint of the double explanation remains; that the God of the Modernists is the same old *Deus ex machina* with a new name. If he has not withdrawn at a distance from his machine like world, he is still an invisible spectator, behind the scenes, unperceived by the players. This "creative spirit", emitting "personality", seems to Naturalism a mere NAME for the processes of orderly change that constitute Nature as we know her, including life and mind. Leave out the name and what have you left? Why, just Nature, mysterious no doubt, but just as comprehensible to science and practical life without these ghostly "realities" as with them.

The only answer to the question, "Can Man know God?" that would satisfy Naturalism is evidence that Man does know God by direct communion with the Deity. Can this be proved? If not, is the feeling of divine presence above the need of proof?

### "EXPERIENCE OF GOD"

If some men have direct knowledge of God by vision, and not merely by inference, all logic chopping arguments fall to the ground; facts always defeat arguments. Is it, then, a fact that man can know God?

Astounding as it seems to Naturalism, millions claim such knowledge, the masses uncritically, blandly mistaking their blissful emotions for the presence of God; profounder thinkers deliberately, mixing reason with emotion.

This "experience of God" varies from the mild feeling of the normal Christian pietist that he has the "witness of God" in his heart to the rapturous ecstasy of the grand mystic who is "plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea and lost in His immensity." The question is whether such feelings are acquaintance with God or with the muddy depths of one's own feelings when he troubles the waters of thought with the drag-net of his search for God. The average believer does not discriminate between inference and intuition. Conviction passes for knowledge with him and thus he escapes the agony of argument and the pains of thinking by "experiencing God." If we deny the possibility of such knowledge, we are told we lack spiritual vision.

But may not this certainty of the presence of a personal God be a case of being sure because you believe rather than of believing because you are sure?

Certain rare powers of the mind are inaccessible to analysis. If, as seems likely, some persons have telepathic powers, we can only stand amazed; such powers in our present state of knowledge cannot be subjected to comparative analysis. The lightning like solutions of mathematical problems by childish prodigies are quite miraculous judged by the ordinary laws of mental operations. But the assertions of the telepathist and the solutions of the mathematical prodigy can be directly verified. When people assert they have direct communion with God we cannot verify their claim; neither can they. The ecstatic experience may satisfy the devotee that he knows God, but if his feelings can be shown to be due to other sources, his vision loses its dogmatic certainty.

### SIGNS OF "GOD'S PRESENCE"

The marks which distinguish the presence of God are well known: happiness, increase of spiritual energy, overflowing love, and, above all, the sense of the presence of a Great Person. Now it happens that we know much about the origin of the feeling of the invisible presence of an absent person. Perhaps the only difference between the feeling of the presence of the dead and that of God is in the object to which one attributes the feeling. The question whether feelings of the divine presence directly reveal



the being of God is of the utmost practical importance. All the issues of fanaticism and intolerance flow from it. The world has been drenched with the blood of the innocent because men have been over certain that they communed directly with a personal God.

It is sometimes questioned whether those who have had no experiences of the mystic order are qualified to discuss them. I do not suffer from this defect. For many years I had such experiences, both of the milder sort common to all devout Christians and also occasional dazzling invasions of "light", such as come to those who "meet God face to face." I have stood on the mountain tops of Beulah Land. The scene was surpassingly fair; so delightful is the wine of pietism. I *know* what the "experience of God" can teach. Place a conch shell to the ear and the roar of the sea is audible; listen longer and you shall hear breakers dashing on a coral stand. The toll of a distant bell means a death, a fire, or curfew, depending on hearer, time and place. The tone is one; the meaning is the judgment of the individual. This is how men know God.

If there is no actual meeting of the spirit with an objective personal God, this pious make-believe is pernicious both to the individual and society in the long run. The fanatical certainty that one deals intimately with a personal God who reveals "truth" to him has bred intolerance, persecutions and wars, as well as nurtured hope and generosity.

### "THAT'S ENOUGH"

Let us be concrete. During an agitation over the

five day week for laborers Judge Gary was quoted in the New York Times as saying, "The commandment says, 'Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work.' The reason it didn't say seven days is that the seventh day is a day of rest, and that's enough."

John E. Egerton, President of the National Association of Manufacturers, says, in the same vein,

"'Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work.' So reads the fifth of the great commandments and for sixty centuries it has been accepted as the divinely prescribed standard of economic effort. It is the perfectly fixed basis of human achievement and social contentment—And all through the Great Book the importance and sacredness of work are emphasized as life's first and continuing obligation. These constant attempts to amend the Decalogue and to adapt by alterations the moral law to the appetites developed by easy and loose living constitute the outstanding peril of our unprecedented prosperity."

In the "inspired" edicts of these rulers of ours millions of workers of many faiths and no faith are admonished to accept unquestioningly the audible message of a visible, personal God, revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai. ("And the Lord said—I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen—And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there." Ex 33:21, 23; 34:5).

These oracular pronouncements of Gary and

Edgerton are merely ignorant dogmatism intolerantly imposing itself by authority of the direct revelation of a personal God. Having said, "That's enough" these men strangely go on to give other reasons against the five day week based on the social and economic conditions of our day. As Mrs. Carlyle said, "The mixing of things is the great Bad."

### GUESSING AT GOD'S PRESENCE

In other matters than religion we do not identify happiness with its source. We trace the joy of eating, of music, of good fortune, to definite known causes. In such cases the fact that causes the feeling is clearly distinguished from the resulting happiness. In the case of the "experience of God" do we first perceive God then feel the happiness, or do we infer God from the happiness? The mystic argues, "I am perfectly happy; such happiness can proceed only from perfect being; therefore it is a direct revelation of God."

Suppose a man who had never heard of the hypothesis of a personal God suddenly caught up into a seventh heaven of delight, without visible cause. Would there be anything in his experience to reveal the existence of a personal God? Surely not; nothing but the feeling of incomprehensible joy. He would conclude he was crazy or ill, and he would be right. A mere noise, however loud, tells us nothing of its origin, if we have never previously associated it with its known cause. No more does a feeling, which is only a spiritual noise.

Professor William James in defending mysticism admits that the experiences of the mystic "may conceivably proceed only from his own higher self." The word "higher" is an argument begging word. Such experiences are equally conceivable as proceeding from one's lower self. It all depends on whether we are to take the vague rumblings that arise from the depths of our unconscious as better or worse than the deliberate conclusions of conscious reasoning.

The vividness of religious emotions cannot prove the real presence of God. Balzac's characters were more real to him than the petty people of his village. When the family had talked local gossip for a while he would say, "Let us come back to realities; let us discuss my books." So powerful is the imagination. Three thousand years ago the Rig Veda said, "There is no likeness of Him whose name is the Great Glory; it is different from the Known; it is also above the Unknown." The feeling of God's presence is a "known"; it is not God, and it bears no marks that place it above dispute as coming from God. Rather, as John Smith, Cambridge Platonist, said, about 1650, "Such as men are in their own hearts, such will God appear to them to be."

## DRUGS AND THE DIVINE

I am greatly indebted to the scholarly work of Professor James H. Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, for most of the material cited in the remainder of this chapter. His book marks a new

epoch in the psychology of religion. Professor Leuba says:

"In the Indic and Iranic cult there was a direct worship of deified liquor.—The officiating priest offered the liquor with words: 'Let those who desire the inexhaustible eternal glories attach themselves to Indra.'—In Greece also intoxication was customary in connection with the established cults.—To the effect of wine was added that of dancing, music, shouting, and the expectation of divine ecstasy."

In these cases the known cause of inspiration is the drug; the inferred object of adoration is a god, but the confusion, as in Christian mysticism, is in taking the experience induced by the drug as a direct revelation of God. Substitute for the drug the auto-suggestion of intense desire for God, plus the imagery of religion, and you have the same effects produced by means quite as natural as wine.

### DANCING, SCENERY, AND YOGA

Dancing, probably religious in origin, has been and still is used to stimulate religious ecstasy. Recently the ghost-dance religion has arisen among the semi-civilized Indians of the United States. It is found among the Mahometans. Europe has had religious dancing sects, and the Holy Jumpers are still with us. The rythmic, physical stimulus here takes the place of drugs, but the effects are the same, absorption in a "higher" life, partial loss of self-

consciousness, forgetfulness of troubles and pains, ecstatic feelings that are nervous in origin, plus auto-suggestion of divine images, the whole identified with the effects of the presence of God.

Under the influence of natural scenery emotions identical with the feeling of the presence of God may arise. Of how many has the following experiences been true:

“Once when walking in the wild woods and in the country, in the morning, under the blue sky, the sun before me, the birds and flowers around me, the breeze blowing from the sea, an exhilaration came to me that was heavenly—a raising of the spirit within me that was perfect joy. Only once in my life have I had such an experience of Heaven.”

Professor Leuba remarks of this experience:

“Many persons feel ‘the presence of God’ in the presence of sublime or beautiful scenery. Prof. McDougall, of Harvard, remarks that this is probably due to the fact that the main emotions evoked are those of admiration and reverence—emotions that involve negative self-feeling. Now negative self-feeling is an attitude referring to persons. Thus one is led to the thought of personal power as the cause of the impression.”

The idea of God is a sublime conception, but its effects are a rhythm of the emotions identical with those produced by many other instruments, however different the means in dignity. An idea of God pro-

duces feelings, but the feelings are not God and their sweetness, intensity and unexpectedness cannot be accepted as intuitive visions of God.

In time man rose more or less above drug intoxication, dancing, and music as conjurors of God. He invented weird psychic methods for producing divine ecstasies. An ancient way, more or less popularized in the United States today by seekers after religious fads, is the Yoga system.

The main propositions of Yoga are: Life is an evil and death begins another life on earth. The goal of Yoga is to escape the round of rebirths. Rebirth is a consequence of desires and passions, and deliverance from these comes by way of "isolating" the self so that it shall be "not conscious of any object." The aim in Yoga is the same fundamentally as the Christian's attempt to "become one with God," although the Christian contemplates a conscious immortality of blessed activity, while the ideal of Yoga is passionless union with the All. Both religions alike tend to identify God with a nebulous haze of intoxicating emotions.

The method of the Yogin is "concentration," fostered by various postures of the body, certain abstinences, regulations-of-the-breath, with fixed attention and contemplation. There is no copyright on this plan; with variations it has been the method of many mystics in divers cults. Yoga is at least specific, admirably adapted for those "practical" Americans who wish to know what to *do* to be saved. Merits, no doubt, it

has, as a system of escape and spiritual elevation; its contention of union with God is all I am concerned to question.

Here is a typical instruction from the Bhagavadgita:

“A devotee should constantly devote his self to abstraction, remaining in a secret place—fixing his seat firmly in a clean place—and there, seated on that seat, fixing his mind exclusively on one point, with the workings of his mind and senses restrained, he should practice devotion for purity of self, holding his body, head, and neck even and unmoved, remaining steady, looking at the tip of his own nose, and not looking looking about in all directions, with a tranquil self, devoid of fear, and adhering to the rules of Brahmakarins, he should restrain his mind and concentrate it on me (the Deity) as his final goal. Thus constantly devoting his Self to abstraction a devotee whose mind is restrained, attains that tranquillity which culminates in final emancipation and assimilation with me.”

Book IV of the Yoga of Pantanjali sums up the paths to holiness thus:

“Perfections proceed from birth, or from drugs, or from spells or from self-castigations, or from concentration.”

If we are correctly informed, the above disciplines sum up the essence of the methods of the “New Messiah,” Krishnamurti. There is a fine catholicity about



the last quotation; it is a frank and consistent assertion that *any* means that raises the devotee out of himself into a state of mystical peace is a path to the divine.

The posturings and breath restraints of Yoga are of course a repression of the activity of the senses that results in a damming up of the feelings, which overflow in a semi trancelike state of passionless peace. In Christianity all the physical aids to worship, Gothic architecture, stained glass, subdued music, and other sensuous aids to mystic worship, take the place of the disciplines of Yoga. In both systems a set of auto-suggestive tricks, psychic and physical, supplant the earlier emphasis on drugs and dancing as a means of producing the ecstatic religious hallucinations.

### A MAKE-BELIEVE GOD

The extraordinary power of auto-suggestion in religious matters is well shown by the following case from Professor Leuba's *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*:

"I prayed constantly after the fashion of the old sceptic: 'O God, if there is a God, save my soul, if I have a soul.'

Then one night, after a week of this sort of thing, the old sense of God's presence came upon me with overpowering fulness.—I felt the Thing, whatever it was—so close to me, so a part of me, that words and even thoughts were unnecessary, that my part was only to sink back into his per-

sonality—if such it were—It felt personal, I said to myself, and no harm would be done by acting as if it were so.”

Observe now this astonishing confession:

“So far as the theoretical question is concerned I cannot say that I am any nearer a solution than before, nor do I see any possibility of a solution. But I care less and less whether He exists outside of my own consciousness or not.”

Perhaps Miss X had read Voltaire’s dictum, “If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him.” Or Kant’s remark, “The concept of a Supreme Intelligence is a mere idea.”

### INVISIBLE PRESENCES

In the autobiography of Santa Theresa we read:

“On the day of St. Peter, as I was in Orison, I saw near me, or rather I felt—for I did not perceive anything, either with the eyes of the body or with the eyes of the soul—I felt Christ near me and I knew it was he who was speaking to me—It seemed to me that He kept walking at my side; and as it was not a vision of the imagination, I did not know under what form—but He was always on my right side. I felt him very clearly.”

My impression is that Professor W. E. Hocking is quite right when he insists that the validity of such “experiences of God” of the grand mystics is inseparably bound up with the genuineness of the religious experiences of all those who believe they are transact-

ing business with a real personal God through prayer. I have heard thousands of Christians make this claim of "direct communion with God." It is the refuge of all who refuse to listen to science, philosophy, or the broad lessons of the history of religion.

Unfortunately for the argument of the mystic the sense of invisible presences is not confined to the supposed presence of God. In mild form who has not experienced the feeling of invisible, personal presences? Awakened by a sudden noise one feels a presence in the room. Passing through a graveyard at night shadowy presences seem to pursue one. In the house but a day since vacated by the dead hovers the presence of the loved and lost, often raised to the intensity of a tangible vision. It is not uncommon for some when lying half awake to hear the voice of the absent, or feel the touch of a vanished hand.

In all such cases we attribute, unless we are superstitious, the cause of the feeling to a purely human association of ideas. Only the simple and the credulous are deceived into believing that the dead walk and that God or angels are near.

In the case of the "experience of God" the words of a familiar text, the indelible images of the Deity impressed on the youthful imagination, the insistent desire for a Perfect Comforter, produce the impression of a personal presence. Without the image, the desire, the conscious or unconscious expectation, the presence does not appear.

How easily and convincingly a mysterious, in-

visible presence may be invoked may be learned from the interesting and significant experiments of Professor Leuba:

### CONJURING GHOSTS

"Each subject, or, as we may call him, each observer, in turn was seated in a dimly lighted room with his back to the assistants, who sat silent some twenty-five feet away. His eyes were carefully covered, so as to exclude all light. He was told that some one might come in and stand near him, back of the chair, and he was asked to indicate whenever he became aware of a Presence.

"At irregular intervals some one would approach silently, walking on thick rugs, and stand for a number of seconds back of the chair of the observer, and then withdraw silently again. In about half the cases the subjects did not perceive the approach of the persons. In other instances some noise or air movements would indicate to him the approach, and he would signal his awareness of a presence. The inference was not confused, however, by the subject with the Sense of Presence.

"Of the seven observers who took part in the experiments, all of them graduate students in psychology, at least half experienced the Sense of Presence.—They had been requested to assume an attitude of passive expectancy.

"Subject A relates: 'Very suddenly there

was a feeling that some one was near me; there was no visualization, except to the point of knowing the person was large. I was sure it was a person and that he or she was behind my chair, a little to the left, about one and one half metres away. (No one was in the room, nor had there been anyone there for about three minutes.) I had a slightly uncanny feeling.' "

"In another observation the same subject remarks: 'After an interval of about ten seconds of passivity and relaxation, there came a sense of presence, not very clear. Then It became very clearly present.' 'Bearing down on me' was the phrase that flitted through my mind. There was a growing feeling of terror tinged with awe. By this time there was a noticeable muscular tension all over, accompanied by an increased rate of breathing.' "

"In another series of experiments subject B relates: 'Finally, without any effort or force, I felt a Presence standing at the table on my right and a little behind my chair. It existed only in reference to me—that is I had no visual or auditory image of it, but felt it only so far as it was aware of me. It did not look at me, but as it turned toward me and put out its arms as if it were about to touch me, I was so overcome with terror that I lost the sense of its nearness and became aware only of my own tendency to shrink away—almost run—and of my quickened pulse.' "

All this evidence seems conclusive as showing that there is nothing unique or inexplicable about the visitations of the "divine presence." It is a self-conjured notion; one may believe, if he wishes, that some objective reality corresponds to it, but he cannot claim intuitive and certain knowledge of that reality. The idea of a real but absent person may give us a vision of his presence. If that is an hallucination, much more so is the fancied presence of a personal God of whom we have had no previous real experience.

Reason dies, and with it progress, if we are to follow the rule of accepting a solution that is not only improbable in itself, but without evidence, though we have a sufficient explanation of another sort, that is both obvious and scientific. It *may* be that the new "cosmic rays," identified by Dr. Millikan, emanating from the unknown depths of space, are messages from an invisible star, sent to us by beings whose form we cannot imagine, using instruments whose powers are unknown to us, with a purpose which we cannot guess. It would be pleasant to know that the human race is not alone in this far too expansive Universe. Meantime the hypothesis that these rays are the result of atomic disintegration, due to immense cosmic forces, of which we already have some knowledge, is more reasonable.

### THE GOD-IDEA AND GOD

If one believes in a Being that may be called God, he may properly attribute the ultimate source of all his

actions and emotions to the mystery that makes existence actual. In this sense all experiences are of the divine. Man's idea of God will still inspire him, but only with just that sort of inspiration that the kind and accuracy of his idea of God are capable of giving.

The idea of God, be it that of a primitive savage or of a modern philosopher, is at least a conviction that a Supreme Power determines the order and fate of the Universe and man. Less than this it would be idle to call God. Grant that no one knows God by direct vision; still it remains true that for each man concentration on his own idea of God must bear some spiritual fruit. Whatever be the process and result of one's allegiance to his God-idea that is his religion, and so far as it is useful it is "true" for him. The God-idea plays on hidden springs of feeling, capable, to be sure, of being evoked by many other causes than prayer. The transcendent emotions of pietism are not revelations of God's nature, but of man's aspirations. His feelings measure the worth and power of his idea; they do not demonstrate either the existence or the presence of a Supernatural Person.

Religion is the allegiance of the heart and will to the God-idea in a spirit of reverence and loyalty. There is perhaps no "mere belief" in God's existence. The proposition, There is a God has played too great a part in the education, hope and despair of every life to be fruitless of action when accepted as true. The coming of this belief ushers us into a new intellectual and spiritual "climate" whose influence is worth far more

than a blind rush of momentary "light" and ecstatic emotion. Life was not made for ecstasy.

The idea of God is the bark which sustains us on the tide of destiny. No man knows the depths he traverses; the tide sweeps us along with all the flotsam and jetsam of the sea, but the path to the shore is cleft by the God-idea. Feeling is not God; the idea of God is not God; the feeling that the idea of God produces in us is not God. We mistake the bark for the ocean; we substitute the noise of the explosion for the gun. The emotions of religious experience are the translations of the vibrations of reason and imagination into feeling. They are the values that flow from the idea of God. Ultimately they come from God in the sense that all things are to be referred at last to the Supreme Mystery, but feelings flow through definite channels and in this case the channel is the idea of God, not a vision of God.

To call the sense of divine presence an "experience of God" is like pointing at the North Star and imagining that thereby we arrive there; it is to confuse a direction with a journey, the starting line with the goal.

The God-idea is not God, but we may believe it is a genuine insight into the existence of Deity. It wears the character of a symbol, erroneous no doubt in form, but in part true. This is the only sort of knowledge finite minds can ever hope to have of God—the certainty of belief, acknowledged as such, but in the case of some of us it is completely satisfying belief.



Men seize upon a thought, a symbol, crystallize it into a formula and say, This is God. But God is greater and other than my idea of God or he is no God. He is other and more than the nameless, mystic emotion the God-idea evokes. If this emotion were like no other, and could be summoned by no other idea; if it really came unsought and unsung; if, above all, it really told us something new, significant, and verifiable about God, then we might say we had direct knowledge of a Being that was at least greater and wiser than ourselves. It does none of these things.

So far as our idea of God is a conclusion of reason, even if it stretches beyond exact demonstration, so far it is to be taken as true. It is a conviction none the less valuable because it is an idea of God instead of an indubitable experience of God.

This conclusion agrees with that of C. Lloyd Morgan, one of the greatest philosophers of today:

“How is the being of God realized in the passing ‘here’ and ‘now’ of current religious experience? To this question must not each one of us reply: It is (or is not) realized in my self of enjoyment—there and at first hand, nowhere else? Primarily the kingdom of God is within us; *not as something other than what one is as mortal man*. God is an object for contemplation only in the same sense as is a personal self in social regard. In other words *what is objective is a concept of God-under ‘ideogram’*, as Dr. Otto puts it.”

To think of God as a man, to learn at last that he

is not like man, and finally to believe that God is all we once thought God and man were, yet is neither in any imaginable sense, is the cycle of the God-idea.

Either we came out of the Universe, or the Universe came out of us, and any one who believes that he rose out of the Universe is justified in pointing back to a Mystery that shapes the finite existences of the known world. He finds that Mystery functioning in his simplest thoughts and believes it to be as broad and deep as the Universe, but this is belief and not knowledge, a supplement to reason, not a substitute for it, an experience of the idea of God, not an intuitive vision of the Godhead.

## CHAPTER IX.

## IS RELIGION A DELUSION?

*"God is our own longing, to which we pay divine honors."*  
—SENECA.

Common sense travels on the "either, or" track. Either religion is true, or it is false; it is either a fact or a delusion. This is an excellent rule in many practical matters, such as, there is a bridge, or there is none; yet the whole truth cannot always be stated as a blank fact.

Religions are fictions, but religion is a truth. Such powerful errors as religious delusions must rest on something real; you can hardly pyramid sky scrapers on a quicksand. While visiting the Mormon Temple I unexpectedly caught sight of the heroic, gilded figure of the angel Moroni that crowns the loftiest spire. Moroni, the legend runs, revealed to Joseph Smith the golden plates on which the Book of Mormon was engraved. Angels and book were nothing to me but hallucinations, yet I was thrilled with the thought of the spiritual endeavor that moulded lives, built cities, and redeemed hearts as well as deserts. Mormonism taken literally as a creed may be a solid block of unreality, but there is truth in the religion of the Mormons.

Truth has strange bed fellows; the creeds, gods, devils, miracles and ceremonies of religions may be as false as you please, but the errors enwrap a truth;

reality survives crazy creeds. The truth of religions will not perish with the destruction of their golden calves and gilded angels.

### GOD AS A FREUDIAN SYMBOL

Religion is often explained away by writers who have adopted the psychology of Freud. Man, they say, cherishes the myth of a personal God, long since invented for him by his savage ancestors. This Perfect Sympathizer of his dreams he clothes with more respectable virtues than did the ancients and appeals to him for sympathy and love. This practice, we are assured, is "infantilism," a harking back to the days when a cry brought milk and the whole household served the infant. We revert to the parasitism of infancy when we call on the imaginary, Perfect Father to furnish us all we lack here below. Freud says:

"The almighty, just God and benevolent nature appear to us as a great sublimation of early childish ideas of them. Religiousness leads back biologically to the long continued helplessness of man, who, when later he has recognized his real loneliness and weakness against the great powers of life, feels his condition similar to childhood, and seeks to disavow this forlorn state by regressive renewal of the infantile protective powers."

"God", for the Freudians, is the mere idealization of a dead or deficient parent. As Seneca put it, "God is our own longing, to which we pay divine honors."

Jung, the second greatest of the psychoanalytic prophets, says:

"God is the name of a representation complex which is grouped around a strong feeling, the sum of the libido—it aims, above all, to replace the discarded infantile father transference."

Dwelling on the thought of the "Father-image," a glow of peace suffuses the troubled heart, and this is "proof" that the Father-God exists. In extreme cases of religious infantilism one's consciousness is all but swallowed up in "God." The escape from life is complete, if temporary. One comes, alas, to earth again, but not without the echo of his ecstasies ringing across the abyss. Such is religion, according to the psychoanalysts, the echo of an image—pure bunk.

Witness the following excerpts from an article on "Religion in the Light of Psychoanalysis", by Moxon, in the Psychoanalytic Review of January, 1921:

"The love which is either unconsciously fixed on a parent, or unable to find a satisfying parent substitute, seeks various symbolic satisfactions as a compromise. Hence it is at puberty that the need occurs for God as a substitute for the father or grandfather.—The convert in his time of stress reverts to the primitive mode of symbolic thought. The symbol serves his purpose because it is a product of the unconscious. It is a compromise between the unconscious forbidden desires and the demands of the conscious mind.—The Bull Calf symbol in the Old Testament is not caused by the idea of a Creator. Both the abstract idea of the Creator and the concrete image of the Bull are

symbolic projections of Man's creative life force and love energy. "The Father" in the New Testament is not the symbolic product of an abstract idea of a being of infinitely tender care for his world. Both ideas are substitutes for the image of the human father; only "The Father" is a more concrete symbol than the metaphysical conception of the Godhead. Both ideas are produced to satisfy the same infantile cravings of the unconscious life at the instigations of the disappointments and sorrows of adult experience.—Belief in God is a product of displaced, projected, and personified love force.—The person who has found full satisfaction directly in marriage and indirectly in social service has no time or energy to spare for communion with a personal God."

Suppose one admits that this is a substantially true account of the genesis of the idea of a personal God. It is, then, a fact, but it is not the whole truth about religion. No doubt our unsatisfied desires breed ideals of perfect happiness. Every one has his air castles; every one knows how easily children and primitive peoples translate their desires into hopes, their hopes into beliefs and their beliefs into certainties. But rational grounds for hope may underlie desire.

### GOD MORE THAN A SYMBOL

All of these Freudian reasonings prove nothing against the essential reality of religion. Suppose the Bull Calf, Javeh and the Father-God are delusions,

taken as actual divinities; we still have left the aspiration of the human spirit toward perfection and happiness. This aspiration is based on a belief that the Universe is friendly to our ideals, and the latter belief on the reasoned conviction that a Mystery that is orderly, beautiful and good penetrates the Universe. It is a belief that sustains man in his fight to overcome the ills of life. One symbol of that faith may be better than another, or worse; the symbols may change or perish, but the conviction that there is a better way of life that may ultimately lead us to perfection does not fail with the fall of the symbol. The ideal comes to us from many sources besides disappointed affection.

No doubt theologies and philosophies have at times been freely invented to fortify belief in God, but not all of them. No man ever reasoned more cogently for the existence of God than Spinoza, yet no man ever asked less of God. He said, "He who truly loves God cannot wish that God should love him in return."

One can say of the arguments of the psychoanalysts against belief in God what Cicero said of another matter, "There is something in this argument, Laelius, but not everything." Their explanations account for the imagery of religion, but not for religion, for the gods but not for God.

Behind the attachment to the human parent and the failures of father and mother love may lie something more than an infantile wish for perfect compensation. Behind the crude image of a Father-God may lie an impulse to the God search that is rooted in the

foundation of the Universe. The Universe may contain the answer to man's needs, however much the real God differs from the childish, perverted and selfish picture of Him man has formed in the historical religions.

All the theories of the evolution of our minds from the vague instincts and desires of our prehistoric animal ancestors are mere matters of the history of how we reached these ideas of God and religion; they do not disprove their fundamental validity. By a long road we came to where we are, and the goal may be as real as the starting point. The genetic origin of our ideas of God may be traced to ghosts, dreams, fears, or a longing for a Perfect Father, but the idea may still point to the ruling principle of the Universe. We may not know what God is, but we may know that he is, what he is not, and, in a measure, what he does. Probably man descended from the apes, but he is not an ape, and by the same token he may yet rise above the status of mere man.

We do not know demonstrably the existence of other human minds. We are certain of their existence, but it is the certainty of belief, not of immediate knowledge. Vocal words and visible gestures, plus muscular and other sense impressions produced in us by a physical body, are all we directly know of our friends. The existence of their conscious minds is as undemonstrable as that of the First Cause. Each of us is a Robinson Crusoe marooned within the confines of his little island body, between whose conscious spirit and the spirits of his fellows walls of flesh intervene.



That we do not think ourselves to be the only persons in the world is due to reason, habit, education and practical necessity.

Our conception of God may become as vividly real as that we have of our fellow spirits; our certainty of his existence may become no less. The orderly panorama of Nature dissolves into a meaningless phantasmagoria, if we do not assert the presence within it of a constitutive Mystery which is the guarantee of its ultimate perfection. "Let it dissolve," says the atheist, thereby expressing the paralysis of his imagination rather than the acuteness of his reason.

### DEWEY ON RELIGION

One may search the writings of John Dewey in vain for evidence of belief in a personal God or the validity of the creeds. Yet the following lines imply the conviction that a Supreme Order of some sort exists which justifies our hope of perfection:

"Fidelity to the nature to which we belong as parts, however weak, demands that we cherish our desires and ideals till we have converted them into intelligence, revised them in terms of ways and means which nature makes possible. When we have used our thought to the utmost and have thrown into the moving unbalanced balance of things our puny strength, we know that though the universe slay us still we may trust, for our lot is one with whatever is good in existence. We know that such thought and effort is one condition

of the coming into existence of the better. As far as we are concerned it is the only condition, for it alone is in our power. To ask more than this is childish; but to ask less is a recreance no less egotistic, involving no less a cutting of ourselves from the Universe than does the expectation that it meet and satisfy every wish." Experience and Nature, pp. 420-421.

### RELIGION NO DELUSION

The Mystery I have described is hardly the child of cheap desires. It is not such a God as a whining, incompetent, begging soul seeks. Rather is it the hard won conviction of philosophic research, the fruit of the thought of many men to whom life, pleasure, immortality itself, were mere baubles compared with their love for the truth. The God of such men is not chiefly the bearer of unearned gifts. He leaves us free to pick our way through a maze of errors, for each of which we pay the price. The conviction of the existence of such a God has outgrown the selfish desire to find a Perfect Parent.

This is religion—to have ideals, to be loyal to them, to believe that our labor is in line with the ground plan of the Universe. Strip religion of its myths and delusions and you may still hold to the belief that the Universe is not unfriendly to man's ideals. When one reaches the top of the cliff he may safely kick down the ladder. The paraphernalia of the his-

torical religions is for such a one a barrier between him and the majesty and excellence of that Mystery by which all men live, whether they know it or not.

No doubt the young and the simple must accept their religious conceptions and practices on authority. One may agree with Plato that a man is not entitled to form opinions of his own on weighty matters before he is thirty. And the old are too solidified by habit to change. Those who are orphans religiously, who have lost God and cannot find Him in the churches, would do well to heed the warning of Emerson:

“Truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity and has ventured to trust himself for a taskmaster. High be his heart, faithful his will, clear his sight, that he may in good earnest be doctrine, society, law, to himself, that a simple purpose may be as strong to him as iron necessity to others.”

### ATHEISTS AND AGNOSTICS

Atheism appears to be on the increase in the Western world. In Russia the Komonsol, or League of Communist Youth, numbers over a million members, all professional atheists and ministers of irreligion. In America the Association for the Advancement of Atheism, and similar rationalist movements, count thousands of adherents. To the atheist the Universe is not a universe but a multiverse, a soulless mechanism that “somehow runs itself”, whatever that may mean. The

world for the atheist is an insoluble riddle driven on by impersonal, indefinable forces, according to mechanical laws. Wanton Chance rules Nature and Man, who will eventually disappear into the chaos of which, to his sorrow and confusion, he arose.

The atheist will not have it that there is any sort of Supreme Being in which man may hope. Mind is a shadowy emanation of matter and personality has no destiny but the grave. The atheist, after all, believes too much and too surely. He may disguise his dogmatism as agnosticism, but he duplicates the arrogant certainty of the scholastic theologian.

An atheist may indeed derive certain satisfactions from life, even if its meaning is bounded for him by the span of his years and his realizable desires. The pursuit of distant and ever larger goals may absorb the atheist. His goal may be a great achievement in art, literature, or business. For such ends he may make great sacrifice of near by pleasures. He will not know whether his goods are lasting goods, the Good, or even good at all, but they satisfy his instinctive desires, which is enough for men with short views of life. There are excellent atheists of this type, some of them within the fold of the church.

I know a "godless" scientist, of distinction, who for many years has recorded thousands of minute observations, most of them useless, he admits; possibly all of them. His aim is to collect data from which, perhaps only after centuries, his successors may draw inferences that may shed light on the origin of earth

movements. Possibly the far off discoveries will be worth while; possibly not. Meantime the pursuit is satisfying.

No doubt some men can "get along" very well on the plane of practical life without the God-belief. Sinclair Lewis could safely challenge God to strike him dead within ten minutes. The values of life which depend on belief in God mean more to some than to others. To some religion is meaningless, not because they are bad, or illogical. They are non-religious for the same reason a parrot is not a poet—they were not born religious. The religious point of view is essentially a specific artistic conception of life; some are gifted to see the signs of the Zodiac in the heavens, while others can see only scattered stars.

Atheism is a clear cut creed. For the rank atheist there is a credulous certainty that God does not exist. The agnostics, however, vary from practical atheists to theists of a sort. The consistent agnostic would dwell in mid-air between faith and unbelief. Probably there is no such animal. The common heritage of human hopes and fears inclines each of us toward either the horizon of faith, or that of negation. The agnostic is to all intents and purposes an atheist, except for certain rare souls whose lives are a denial of their denials of God. Either there is a God or there is not an alternative that is never quite avoidable.

### A HARD-BOILED AGNOSTIC

Recently I received the following letter from a physician of fifty:

“Regarding your questions about God, the hereafter, etc.—I would say very definitely that I don’t know. I can find no proof. There is nothing about the human mind or body, or about any living thing, that makes me think there is the slightest hope for life after death. All my observations show me that life is like a flame; blow it out and where did it go? Will it have a life afterward? No.

All living things are in the same category. The human being has no right to expect a hereafter any more than the lowest plant; they are alike; they are different only in magnitude and degree, not in kind. Life is the manifestation of certain processes and cannot exist apart from them.

Regarding God I don’t know either, but there may be one, or maybe more. Kant’s argument does not prove there is no God; it only proves that one is unnecessary. The argument by which the Universe arose by chance is good and is comprehensive and will include God or any number of gods. Of one thing I am certain—that no God interferes with the action of the different forces, regardless of prayer. So I find no evidence either for or against the existence of God.

The ‘feeling’ that God exists (the argument of Emerson and Co.) is an ‘emotion’ and not an argument. To be logical the argument must be universal and not limited to a group of believers.”

The writer of this letter had just experienced an attack of facial paralysis. Agnosticism may be an opiate for him. In the absence of the stimulus of a positive faith one is likely to seek comfort in opiates. One might reply to him that the *feeling* that "the feeling that God exists is an emotion and not an argument" is itself an "emotion" and not an argument. When feeling argues against feeling which shall win? Apparently in the matter of a belief in God we are like travellers standing on the bank of a river whose further shore is lost in the mist. One sees a shore; the other does not. A blind man could not choose between their opinions, but there appears to be no demonstrative reason why each should not cling to his own view, since each in the end rests his conviction on an inward certainty.

### THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

The facts of Nature and the witness of our own hearts bring some of us nearer to God than to human minds; but we are brought up with a conception of God as a distant Being, approachable only at fixed times and places, through fixed formulas of belief and worship. Add that God was almost invariably pictured as a Severe Old Man, dealing out retributive justice, and it is not difficult to see that the contact with the God-idea was too infrequent, unreal and repugnant to breed the conviction of his existence. Such conceptions are bound to go the way of faith in fairies, dragons, and other unlovely creations of the savage imagination.

To those who have shed these inconsistent fancies the belief in the Ultimate Being may appear the first of certainties. The evidence is on an immeasurable scale; it is always with us. But this belief demands of a rational man the willingness to accept the universal God, not the tribal God others would thrust upon him, or the Private Patron he would prefer should exist.

No doubt in ages of faith, in savage tribes, in the medieval church, binding custom, or ecclesiastical tyranny, forced a certain unanimity of belief. "What do you believe?" asked Luther of a charcoal burner. "I believe whatever Holy Church believes," was the reply. "Well, what does Holy Church believe?" persisted Luther. "I don't know," answered the peasant.

After all, the old kind of certainty had its limitations. It was like a ship so wide that it would not roll, but so blunt that it would not forge ahead. The new certainty is gyroscopic; the car is ever on the verge of overbalancing itself, but is ever righting itself; the old certainty was merely stationary. The saint of old had faith in his faith; we have faith in God. The saint of old believed in *his idea* of truth; we believe in truth's eternal advance by its own internal force. What the saint of old did was to handcuff truth to his side; we run beside it, now near, now far, but ever pursuing. When he translated his creed into fancied certainty he made truth finite; when we recognize that today's truth is not also tomorrow's truth we admit that truth is infinite in expression. It is not hard to see which is the more religious. As for certainty, he had it as



we never can, but the value of certainty is judged by its fruit, and its fruit with him was too often stagnation or persecution.

The faith of the Fundamentalists is merely formal and docile, when it is not fanatical. The leaven of a self-formed belief is not in it. Those for whom the old theologies are torn to tatters must win their own way to their own God. Each for himself must gain the conviction which was once handed to him, signed, sealed, and certified as infallible. The honesty and stability of his conviction and the spiritual value of his God-idea will be correspondingly greater. The delusions of orthodoxy may be dissipated, but the reality of religion will remain.

## CHAPTER X

## EVERYMAN'S RELIGION

*"Note.—Here, doubtless, the readers will become confused and will recollect many things which will bring them to a standstill, and therefore I pray them to proceed gently with me and form no judgment concerning these things until they have read all."*—

SPINOZA.

## RELIGION OR IRRELIGION?

Here I will try to show what this book *means*. Of what use is it to religion if the ghost of materialism be laid only to rise again as ghostly Mystery? If the Universe yields no personal response to the anguished cry of human need, what room is there for religion, a word that signifies the tie that binds man to God? If law, not love, binds us to God, religion is a passing myth.

This is the view of Croce, Italy's greatest philosopher:

"Their religion was the whole intellectual patrimony of primitive peoples; our intellectual patrimony is our religion.—We do not know what use could be made of religion by those who wish to preserve it side by side with the theoretic activity of man, with his art, his criticism, his philosophy.—Philosophy removes from religion all reason for existing.—As a science of the spirit it looks upon

religion as a phenomenon, a transitory historical fact, a psychic condition that can be surpassed."

If by "religion" Croce means actual historical cults, with their creeds, dogmas, rituals, temples and priests, I would agree with him that such crutches are unnecessary to a thoroughly rational man. If, however, Croce means that there is no room in philosophy for worship of the Supreme Reality, I align myself with Rev. George A. Gordon, who says:

"There is in nearly all men some sense of the Unseen Reality that is over against each man's existence, that is over against the existence of the Race. It is the Infinite Other and companion of the soul, whether we are indifferent to it and it to us or not. It is there as Reality, as an inscrutable something, and even when there is no dialogue between it and the soul, when each is toward the other dumb, the grand Totality of Being is not without profound and amazing influence upon human thought and feeling."

This is mysticism, but a mysticism which supplements reason without annihilating it. Can a rational man worship Mystery stripped of mysterious rites? The answer is that some have done so. Thinkers differ here. One man reverences Infinite Being, while another rebels. One is confident of eternal triumph, another sure of speedy extinction. Why this parting of paths? Is it because "many are called but few are chosen?" Is it because a Croce is logical and a Gordon illogical? Or is it a matter of grit? Were Nietzsche,

Haeckel, are Russell and Santayana, brave, and is it Bergson and Whitehead, Lodge and Millikan who worship God because they dare not defy Fate?

If our choice of religion or irreligion depends on answering such questions we shall die agnostic. If anything on earth is individual, a man's solitary possession, it is his religion. "What is your religion?" asks one of the characters in a novel of E. Bulwer Lytton's. "My religion is the religion of all sensible men, but no sensible man ever tells what his religion is."

Why not? Because it is impossible to give a final reason for a choice that springs either from ultimate freedom or ultimate necessity. Your spirit cleaves to the thought of the Supreme Being, or it turns coldly away. Argument may influence you, sorrow may transform you, example may win you, or they may not. Such is freedom, of, if you prefer, necessity

One of the greatest philosophers in America (some say the greatest) wrote the following concerning this book:

"I have received and read your manuscript, and hardly know what to say. The reason is this: it is well, clearly, and often eloquently written, given its standpoint. But it is not a standpoint with which personally I am in sympathy. And I use sympathy here in an emotional rather than in an intellectual sense. That is, I see no logical or intellectual way of disproving or discrediting it,

but it doesn't touch me; it's not what religion means to me, and religion to my mind is much more important than God, who is the outgrowth of religion and not its basis. When I say this I am not presenting an argument, but simply stating the standpoint from which it appeals to me. All strictly physical and existential approaches to God merely leave me cold; when they are finished I have so much physics and no religion. For all I know this is my own limitation. You, and many others, perhaps most, get what I may call without meaning a disrespect a religious kick out of a mystery behind the physical universe. I get my kick somewhere else."

It is facts like this letter that convince many that our arguments serve to defend our beliefs but not to originate them. I will turn from a great philosopher to one whose greatness has stood the test of more than two centuries, that majestic thinker, who got unfailing inspiration from "strictly physical and existential approaches to God," Benedictus Spinoza.

### SPINOZA'S RELIGION

And who was Spinoza? A seventeenth century Portuguese-Jew, of Amsterdam, who survived the knife of a pious assassin to write his Ethics, greatest of books about God. Standing by Spinoza's statue Renan said:

"This man, from his granite pedestal, will point to all men the way of blessedness which he

found; and ages hence the cultivated traveller, passing by this spot, will say in his heart: "The truest vision ever had of God came perhaps here."

In Spinoza, whose conception of God has been unwittingly confirmed to a degree by modern science, I find a supreme example of the worship of Mystery. Spinoza's God is "a being absolutely infinite," a self-subsistent essence;" in other words, pure mystery. Briefly expressed, his working conception of God is thus stated in one of his letters:

"I hold that God is the immanent, and not the extraneous cause of all things. I say All is in God; all lives and moves in God. It is, however, a complete mistake on the part of those who say that my purpose—is to show that God and Nature,, under which last term they understand a certain mass of corporeal matter, are one and the same."

No one ever rested his idea of God on a more formless abstraction than Spinoza, yet he could say:

"If once we get to know God, at least with a knowledge as clear as that with which we also know our own body, then we must become united with him even more closely than we are with our body, and be, as it were, released from the body."

This mystical language, so much like that of the fanatical pietist, is not to be understood after the manner of those who worship God as a Person. Spinoza was speaking of the "intellectual love of God," his

"third kind of knowledge," an absorption in the thought of God as the essence of "Nature" in all its variety and fulness.

The secret of this knowledge is not easily told. No doubt it is caviare to the majority, yet it is the key to every man's religion, when rightly understood.

"Self-subsistent essence" means nothing to many thinkers of the type of man whose letter is quoted above. Carl Van Doren, speaking of the idea of God, says, "In the concept alone can he be studied; the essence eludes the grasp of the human mind.—Behind all their conceptions (of God) still lies the abyss of ignorance."

Ignorance of this sort is our salvation religiously. A Universe and a God we could comprehend would in fact be neither. The essence of religion is, above all, the conviction that after some fashion we are grounded in a being whose "essence" is not supernatural, but supra-human. This seems to imply belief in a personal God to whose authoritative will we are blindly obedient. Such implications are inevitable, since most of our thinking is done through words to which the remnants of childish attitudes cling. The quotations from Spinoza are examples. Yet, with Spinoza, I do not feel that abandonment of belief in a personal God leaves me without infinite companionship. The Mystery must include the possibilities of our self-consciousness, since we live in and by it.

Does this bring us back to the belief in a personal God? No doubt, if you weigh merely the dictionary

meaning of words and compare them by the rules of formal logic. But I have passed from logic to life. I observe that a Being that was self-conscious in any sense akin to my self-consciousness could rule neither man nor the stars. I feel sure that God is no compartmented collocation of conscious spirit, mechanical energy and creative potency, separated by thought-tight bulkheads. The Mystery I worship is not a bundle of gods, but the One and Only God, whom I shall continue to worship, though all men say it is impossible.

It is plausible to deny that one can worship the Absolute Mystery. There is some truth in the denial; the figures of speech in which all our worship is clad keep trooping in on us, but we continually reject them, continually assert to ourselves that these images are mere springboards from which we leap to the Infinite Other. Let Spinoza explain this.

### “INTELLECTUAL LOVE OF GOD”

Spinoza said:

“He who rightly knows that all things follow from the necessity of the divine nature and come to pass according to the eternal, natural, and regular laws, will find nothing at all that is worthy of hatred, laughter or contempt, nor will he deplore anyone, but, as far as human virtue can go, he will endeavor to act well, as people say, and to rejoice.—It is therefore extremely useful in life to perfect as much as we can the intellect or reason,



and of this alone does the happiness or blessedness of man consist; for blessedness is nothing else than to understand God and his attributes and actions which follow from the necessity of his nature.—From the third kind of knowledge arises necessarily the intellectual love of God. For from this kind of knowledge arises pleasure accompanied by the idea of God as the cause. ”

No one knew better than Spinoza that a religion as austere as this is with difficulty translated into life:

“If the road I have shown to lead to this is very difficult, it can yet be discovered. And clearly it must be very hard when it is so seldom found. For how could it be that it is neglected practically by all, if salvation were close at hand and could be found without difficulty? But all excellent things are as difficult as they are rare.”

Are these pious sayings of Spinoza merely the obscure musings of a man “intoxicated with God,” as Novalis described Spinoza? What is this mysterious “third kind of knowledge?” Mere medieval metaphysical bunk, revamped for twentieth century consumption? Let us see.

Spinoza viewed Nature, including both men and things, as the vesture of the self-subsistent essence which he calls God. “The intellectual love of God” means, then, not merely the belief that all of Nature is a revelation of God but the felt recognition of the Self as one with God in that union with Nature. I am not speaking as those who pick and choose certain con-

genial aspects of nature and man as revelations of God, then piece these fragments into a definition. Spinoza's God was no mannikin, no hastily assembled scarecrow, but the absolutely infinite. "Nature or God," as Spinoza put it, is not merely the essence of *our* Universe, but of all universes, actual and possible, past and to come, of which man and *his* universe are incidental fragments.

Religion with Spinoza was neither a dogma nor a theory but the living apprehension of Destiny as a dramatic fact in which one passes from petty selfish endeavors to a serene contemplation of the Infinite expressed through the finite. Spinoza would say that all sincere devotion to the higher aims of life, whether in science, art, love, business, or even politics, is essentially religious, whether consciously so or not. "The greatest good is the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of nature."

At a memorial service for teachers of Columbia University who died during the year 1926, Dr. James T. Shotwell characterized their work as the essence of religion, literally, not figuratively. Their endeavors were "at one with that which religion sanctifies and accepts in the categories of the sacred—The City of God extends itself to include the furthest conquests of the human mind and its citizenship includes service for humanity." This is Spinozism.

When to great devotion to creative ends in life one adds the consciousness of living in the presence and

by the help of the Supreme Mystery, he experiences, as Spinoza says, "the love of God, not in so far as we imagine him to be present, but in so far as we understand God to be eternal; this is what I call the intellectual love toward God."

God "in so far as we imagine him to be present" is the false personal god of immature religion. "In so far as we understand God to be eternal" means the realization of God as "the indwelling and not the transient cause of all things."

Bosanquet says of this knowledge, "We should see the truth better if we had fuller experience, but the perception in question, if we have the eyes to see it, is in all the experience we possess."

### SPENGLER ON RELIGION

It is a far cry from the lens grinder of Amsterdam to Otto Spengler, author of that amazing book, *The Decline of the West*. Spengler, if I am right, entertains fundamentally the same view of religion as Spinoza:

"Every soul has religion, which is only another word for its existence. All living forms in which it expresses itself—all arts, doctrines, customs, all metaphysical and mathematical form worlds, all ornament, every column and verse and idea—are ultimately religious, and *must* be so. But from the setting in of civilization they *cannot* be so any longer. As the essence of every culture is religion, so—and consequently—the essence

of every civilization is irreligion. The two words are synonymous."

To appreciate the meaning of this quotation it is necessary to bear in mind the meanings Spengler attaches to "Culture" and "Civilization." Culture is the springtime of a soul or period, the time when it enters creatively (i.e., religiously) into life. Civilization is the decline and death (irreligiousness) of culture. Spengler says, "Civilizations are the most external artificial states of which a species of developed humanity is capable—death following life, rigidity following expansion."

The "irreligious" of Spengler are those who have ceased to transcend themselves by devotion to a worthy aim:

"As to the living representatives of these new and purely intellectual creations, the men of the 'New Order,' upon whom every decline time finds such hopes, we cannot be in any doubt. They are the fluid megalopolitan populace, the rootless city-mass (hoi polloi, as Athens called it) that has replaced the People, the Culture folk that sprung from the soil and was peasant like even when it lived in towns. They are the market place loungers of Alexandria and Rome, the newspaper readers of our own corresponding time, the 'educated' man who then and now makes a cult of intellectual mediocrity and a church of advertisement; the man of the theatres and places of amusement, of sport and 'best sellers'."

This is, of course, a harsh and sweeping generalization, aimed primarily at the Babbitts, worshippers of "the God of things as they are," people to whom life is "just one thing after another," as contrasted with those who use life creatively, according to their measure, in art, science, and industry.

Such a conception of religion and irreligion is a challenge to those who flee from life to "religions," and no less to those who would exclude religion from life. *The vital religious issue of today is not whether we shall swear by Fundamentalism or Modernism, but whether we shall exclude religion entirely from life or identify religion with life lived well and wisely.*

### IS THIS RELIGION?

Neither Spengler's nor Spinoza's view of religion assumes the existence of an objective, personal God. Spinoza says:

"If intellect and will appertain to the eternal essence of God, something far else must be understood by these two attributes than what is commonly understood by them. For intellect and will which should constitute the essence of God must differ *toto caelo* from our will and intellect, nor can they agree in anything save name, nor any more than the dog as a constellation and the dog as a barking animal agree."

The term "God" (*deus*) is conventional in Spinoza. His pious terminology is an accommodation to the thought of his readers. Yet his attitude toward his ab-

stract deity is religious; for there is a serene, if austere, adoration in his "intellectual love of God." Spinoza's religion was not a mystic union with the One who is reached by forgetting self and the world of men and things. His life was not one of retreat from strife, but acceptance of it; he sought to master nature and yet remain elevated above the accidents of riches, fame and power.

This is Naturalism, plus idealism. The solution of the "conflict between science and religion" was simple for Spinoza. He did not foolishly try to solve it by assigning them separate, disparate spheres of existence, denying the validity of one in the interests of the other. For him they were not opposing realms of thought but intersecting circles. Whatever truth science revealed was the truth of and about God; its successes and failures alike were inescapable "modes" of the Eternal. Let the conclusions of science conflict with the creeds and nullify the letter of the Scriptures; nothing is sacred but truth, and truth cannot escape God, for which it is but another name.

### A COMPLETE GOD-IDEA

This is a very good doctrine of God, because it is complete; nothing is left unprovided for, even if the how of things is left in mystery. There is nothing flabby about such an idea of God. It is not a weak compromise with the spirit of an age; it yields nothing to the dictation of the ignorant and vulgar. A better vision of God may come; we may adopt Spinoza's

conception of God to our larger knowledge of man and nature, but to date it appears to be nearer the "truth about God" than any other man has reached.

Any conception of God as the Infinite will always be a conclusion that contains more than the premises. When we ask for a conception of God adequate to explain the world and life in their ultimate meaning we are setting too great a task for science and logic. The God-idea is the expression of the deepest of all needs; its value lies in its response to those needs, no matter by what path the idea is reached, provided the reasoning does not contradict reason.

The conviction of God's existence is self-sustaining, once it is fully experienced; this is the essence and reality of religion. Experience shows, however, that that conviction may wane and even disappear for a time. The possibility that they may lose God through a slip in logic, or the incompetence of human reason to solve this greatest of problems, pursues some sick souls with a mania of uncertainty. Let such take counsel of Spinoza:

"And in the same manner in which we can arrive at the knowledge of a triangle, although we do not know for certain whether some arch-deceiver deceives us—in that manner, I say, we can arrive at the knowledge of God, although we do not know for certain whether there be any arch-deceiver; and *when we have it*, it will suffice to remove, as I said, all doubt which we can have of clear and distinct ideas."

## A GOD FOR TODAY

This is a God that fits our age. We are hopelessly, it sometimes seems, swallowed up in the mastering of Nature, buried in mechanisms, alternately burrowing into the intricate depths of matter, or guessing at the motions and composition of incredibly distant stars. Society, law, government, education, business, pleasures, have grown painfully complicated. We lack time and wisdom to discover who we are and whither we are going. Many do not find the God they have lost; knowledge drowns insight; surfeited with problems, we neglect the greatest of questions, What and where is God?

Spinoza says to us, God is here, there, everywhere; nothing is alien to him. He is the mystery, the majesty, the beauty, truth, and goodness of all you know and may yet discover. Why is not this God real to us? Because we have followed other and lesser gods who have failed us. We have limited the God-idea to a person, a law, a creative good will, a vision of perfected Humanity. Myopic probers of Destiny, we have sought to pry off the lid of the Universe with a bodkin.

The mind is an instrumental function of the brain, Naturalism tells us. Very well, ideas are the instruments of the mind. Our ideas of God have been petty; match the instrument to the deed and we shall find a religion that will equal our needs.

The question recurs whether there is anything left of worth for emotional religion in the word "God"



when we think of it as meaning the "essence" of the Universe. If one is asked to worship the Nothing that is Everything, is it not absurd? When "God" disappears in Absolute Mystery why write Mystery with a capital and call it God? Is not Bradley's quip justifiable, "They call the Unknowable God because they do not know what the devil else to call it?"

### MYSTERY AND FACT

Quite so, if you are reasoning only with words and only about words. But mystery does not mean that there is nothing real of which we may be certain, but that there is something unknown, which we nevertheless know to be the one Reality. In the case of a ring puzzle the mystery is the order of motions through which the intertwined rings must be put in order to separate them. If no one knew the secret, the mystery would still be a fact. Now we have the conviction that the secret of the Universe belongs to an order of reality that we can neither define nor imagine, and will ever remain so; the mystery that is God is bottomless.

But we can bow in adoration before the Mystery with a worship that is joyful, not servile. We can hope eternal progress from it. So far as we grasp the workings of nature, so far is God made real for us in the only sense in which we can speak of knowing God. It is just when and only when we do this with a due sense of the majesty and perfection of the Eternal that we feel the "intellectual love of God."

Nature is all divine, including man, every detail perfect in its relation to the Whole that we do not see, but in which we believe. Meanwhile for us finite beings there are distinctions of divinity. Some aspects of nature have more for us of beauty and truth than others; for us the difference between good and evil, the ugly and the artistic, are just what they seem to be, God or no God. More of what we are accustomed to call "divine" shines through one man than another, one landscape than another, one poem than another, one religion than another.

### EVERYMAN'S RELIGION

To be religious thus is, in principle, to be completely religious. No ideal of holy monk retiring to prayer in his cell ever equalled this conception of religion. This view of God sanctifies not merely the individual but the world, fearlessly sweeps both our good and our evil into its vision of the divine and bows to *all* the edicts of Infinite Being.

To be religious in this sense is an act of the whole Self, not mere formal assent to a logical proposition. The power to see life so cannot be passed on by words; one can learn to sing only by singing. One must give himself up to the impulse of religious intuition to test its quality. It is an insight beyond speech, revealed only when will and intellect unite in one act of reasonable devotion.

Doubtless, few attain this height in great degree, but that does not lessen the validity of the insight. Once

one sees God thus he is as sure of the truth and meaning of his vision as any scientist of his energy, mass and motion, any miner of his gold, or any medieval saint of his apparition of the bleeding Christ.

There are moments when we catch a glimpse of Nature at her best, alone at dusk on a cliff by the sea, the sun just set, the moon rising full, the stars marching to their stations, the tide swelling along miles of white strand. The tremendous interplay of physical forces running down to the infinitesimal and off into the inconceivably distant depths of world-studded space is felt by us as the intimation of a Great Thought fulfilling itself.

We are but a minute fraction of the Universe and know nothing of cosmic purposes. Literally taken, Nature is not a thought and there is no Thinker spanning the skies but ourselves. One may stand under the starry vault and view his assertion of God as the impotent and impertinent assurance of a worm that surveys its self-magnified ego. The power and wisdom that fill the empyrean with the cycle of budding and dying worlds are unthinkably different from our hop, skip and jump thinking and our external toyings with the trivialities of our mechanical achievements. Yet the Mystery is not so alien to us that we fail to perceive it must be there and be all embracing in its scope, holding all matter, all spirit, all space, motion and force in a grasp that never falters, nor is ever balked by death, devils or distance. It does not matter greatly what you call IT; its reality is revealed by the constructive imagination, not by words.

## THE TRUE MYSTICISM

The question agitated of late, "is the world running down?" becomes unimportant when our thought enters a region where up and down, before and after, within and without, are merged in one undying Whole. When we are merely mouthing words—repeating thoughts without feeling them, we may devour ourselves with denials and despair, but when in a moment of intuitive reflection we catch a vision of the Universe as a dramatic whole, we are sure we have rested for an instant in the bosom of the Eternal. As C. Lloyd Morgan puts it, "In our passing life we touch the fringe of immortality when we acknowledge God as Ultimate Substance."

This is the true mysticism that does not abandon reason and self-consciousness by shutting out the world of things and ideas. It is the "self-recognition" of Bosanquet instead of the self-annihilation of Buddhism. What is done here is indeed to get away from the deadening grip of a few, scattered facts and petty thoughts by summoning all the thoughts we can muster, marshalling them by regiments, brigades and corps into an immense army which shall become a living whole through the massing of its individuals.

This attitude at its best is the supreme philosophic insight which Bradley describes as "experiencing Deity." As such it is given, no doubt, to only a few, but the same insight, even when not recognized as religious, belongs to the poet, the builder, the artist, to the humblest worker who gives himself up to a great

devotion. As Huxley said, "It does not take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him," and *when a man puts all there is of himself into any activity or thought by which he enters heartily into the life of nature, society, or even the religion of the churches, he is so far forth religious.*

It is thus I would interpret the mystic joy of Rupert Brooke in the passing show of life:

#### FROM A LETTER OF RUPERT BROOKE

"It consists in just looking at people and things as themselves, neither as useful, nor moral, nor ugly, nor anything else; but just as being. At least that's a philosophical description of it. What happens is this, that I suddenly feel the extraordinary value and importance of everybody I meet and almost everything I see.—I roam about places—yesterday I did it even in Birmingham—and sit in trains and see the essential glory and beauty of all the people I meet.—I know their states of mind are bad. But I'm so much occupied with their being there at all that I don't have time to think of that. I tell you that a Birmingham, gouty, tariff reform, fifth rate business man is splendid, immortal and desirable.

It's the same about the things of ordinary life. Half an hour's roaming about a street or village, or railway station, shows so much beauty that it's impossible to be anything but wild with suppressed exhilaration. And it's not only beauty

and beautiful things. In a flicker of sunlight on a blank wall, or a reach of muddy pavement, or smoke from an engine at night, there's a sudden significance and importance and inspiration that makes the breath stop with a gulp of certainty and happiness. It's not that the wall or the smoke seem important *for* anything, or suddenly reveal any general statement, or are rationally seen to be good or beautiful in themselves—only that *for* you they're perfect and unique. It's like being in love with a person."

Perhaps Spinoza would not call this mood "the intellectual love of God," but I will. One can explain it otherwise as an extreme expression of the contagious joy of exuberant youth. Brooke was a high strung, young poet, in love with nature and man; he painted the world with the hues of his own vivid sensibilities. How simple!

And yet this explanation may be inadequate. It merely says Brooke was happy and therefore the world shone with beauty. But Brooke says the world shone with beauty and *therefore* he was happy. Quite likely that is the better explanation. Some mystery of the incessant creativity we call the world spoke to him through the rude symbols of dingy walls and ill-favored men that inspired him with ideals of perfection.

The supreme mystery is *why* anything *is*; the supreme miracle is *that* it is, and the supreme insight is to share in the miraculous *becoming* of things. Brooke, I surmise, *felt* existence coming out of the Void into

Being. For most of us, most of the time, things are seen as finished, bald *facts*, dead chronicles of history. We are absorbed in their arrival rather than in their becoming; we trace causes rather than live in effects at the vital moment of their birth in time. No one to whom the world is merely an aggregation of completed, dead, and decaying *facts* could find beauty everywhere. Greater than the defects of things is the vision of the Whole shining in each fragment.

Brooke, to be sure, was not thinking about "God." Had he done so, he might have missed the beauty of God's handiwork. He was standing on holy ground without knowing the power that sanctified it. His feeling was of the essence of religion, not as analyzed, but as experienced.

If now one adds to this love of all things a consciousness, however imperfect, of the sweep of their onward surge from the Mystery that is God, he experiences in its highest degree "The intellectual love of God." This is no vapid, cowardly retreat into nothingness, a flight from reality, dross and pain into Nirvana; it is life at its highest pitch of self-conscious reason. But it is not mere *reasoning*; conscious logic is fatal to the *experience* of religion. It is reason as the soul's undivided consciousness of Destiny.

The mysticism of a Brooke finds the glory of God in the things of the day and sense rather than in the Inaccessible One of Plotinus. To be sure, Brooke denies that his joy in the varied panorama of life is due to discernment of the rational good, utility, or morality

as philosophic abstractions. Not only are beauty and perfection not fully realized in the crude realities of the pavement and the Birmingham business man; they are not even to be sought there. All sniffing around like a Diogenes hunting with his lantern for an honest man is foreign to the poet's search. He is contemplating life, enjoying it, not criticising it. By some magic, which he is neither concerned nor competent to analyze, he succeeds in grasping and enjoying the ideal perfections which filter through the slime of life. He is not thinking about "seeing God in all things;" he is doing it.

In a small way, in a narrow sphere, to be sure; even a Spinoza does not grip all the details of a Universe in his mind, "in the light of eternity." Life is so vast in its variety that one wanders as in a tropical forest. Here an orchid, there a clinging vine fills the eye with beauty. One is now lost in the sepulchral gloom of interlacing branches and now bathed in the sunlight of the open glade. The forest is obscured by the trees, yet the orchid and the vine have a meaning when seen in the immensities of the forest that they lack in the hot house. The breath of a solitude that rings with multitudinous vibrating life imparts a majesty and delicacy beyond description. Implicitly the "intellectual love of God" is in such appreciations. It is there wherever the intellect passes out of itself nobly into the vision of Nature as triumphant creativity.

Irwin Edman has vividly expressed the meaning of "intellectual love of God," in his appreciation of Santayana's doctrine of Spirit:



"It is the talent occurring among those highly complex and casual animals called human beings, in moments of equilibrium and peace of seeing "the eternal aspects of things." . . . The perturbed political and moral animal is coerced by mechanical necessity and moral crises, for the most part, to see things in the anxious terms of their utility and interest for him, in their accidental transience through his own flickering and transient life. But he may on occasions see them tranquilly and lucidly "in the light of eternity" for what they are inalienably. . . . It is these moments of impartial vision of the eternal characters of whatever happens to exist, and the external characters of whatever non-existent possibilities fill for a time the dreaming speculative vision; it is these moments that constitute the being of spirit. . . . It is the immediate beholding, the intuition of some finite being in its purity, in its own irretrievable character, for its own sake. It is unmistakable contact with the unquestioned ultimate. It is any free glint of laughter, or reason, or love."

Anything may be enjoyed on a narrow, selfish plane. Life, men and art may be analyzed after a mechanical photographic fashion without depth or color. Thus some travellers return from Europe bristling with statistics, gossip of courts, tales of castles and museums "done" as per schedule. They have stared at everything and seen nothing. I was gazing upward at the statue that crowns the highest

spire of Milan Cathedral when a tourist bellowed raucously in my ear, "How do you suppose they got that thing up there?"

"I would rather not know," I replied; "to me it is the consummation of an ideal."

Thoreau understood the "third kind of knowledge" :

"The highest that we can attain to is not knowledge but Sympathy with Intelligence. I do not know that this higher knowledge amounts to anything more definite than a novel and grand surprise on a sudden revelation of the insufficiency of all that we called knowledge before—a discovery that there are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. It is the lighting up of the mist by the sun. Man cannot *know* in any higher sense than this any more than he can look serenely with impunity in the face of the sun."

Thoreau saw more on the shores of Walden Pond than the average globe-trotter sees in circling the earth. "Sometimes," he writes, "as I drift idly on Walden Pond, I cease to live and begin to be." On his death bed, when asked by his pious brother about his hopes for eternity, he replied, "One world at a time, brother, one world at a time." But what a world was his! One in which he was afraid neither to live nor die. For him the world was rich beyond dreams of golden streets. For Thoreau, as for Brooke, the essential beauty of another world shone through all things,

the petty and the imperfect as well as the obviously artistic and magnificent. These men were conscious of God without being self-conscious.

Our names and formulas are foam on the surface of the religious life; they have their place, but not as objects of worship. To worship is to pass out of the prison house of self into the deeper meaning of nature and life, not beyond them to a blinding vision of ecstatic union with the Nameless One. There is a place, too, for that experience—in the Past. Plotinus and Eckhart made the world richer, but the better way for us is to greet the advancing God who shines through the drab deeds of the day's drudgery and meets the open eyed at every angle from which they view nature and man. We of today have accepted the world; we cannot go back to the old mysticisms. We hear it said that "Things are in the saddle riding Mankind." It is so, but we cannot evade the burden by building fresh monasteries; what we can do is to ride Things instead of letting them ride us. We can make slaves of our possessions instead of letting them make slaves of us.

### DREAMS AND REALITY

Man has deceived himself so long with his posings before fictitious gods that a sham attitude toward life and God seems necessary to him, even after the sham is exposed. The naked truth and tremulous hopes are beggars food to him. He will not look down at the brown earth he treads and possess himself of his patri-

mony. A crazy man once said to me, "Do you see that island in the lake? I am going to build me a palace there—with walls of green marble and floors of gold—at least" (a shade of sanity passing over his features) "I think I am."

It was a dream, and so is this world. No rational being could have guessed in advance that this strange world could be; on paper it is a mass of contradictions and impossibilities. There may be another world, a little less ridiculous, to follow it. How silly to ask when and where. At our elbow, it may be; here and now, perhaps, if we will. The crazy man proved his folly by allowing himself to add, "At least, I think so."

"I shall be better tomorrow" is good medicine, but "I am better now" is the best. If things turn out ill, there is another tomorrow, and nothing braver can be said of a man that on the edge of the grave he built himself a palace.

Only let him not be a dull fellow who nails his Heaven down to such and such a latitude. "I know not where his islands lift their fronded palms in air; I only know I cannot drift beyond His love and care." Superstition? Yes, taken literally. Poetry aside, we may put it, Nothing that is mere chance can happen to me of good or ill; the Universe that bore me loves itself in my love of life; its will is my will and my rebellion is the only sham and disaster possible. The choice is mine to share the peace of the One Will that alone sweeps all purposes into its triumph. Still superstition? Certainly; superstition, rightly understood, is

the essence of the adventure of life; our only concern is to make the same intelligent progress in religious superstition that we make in the superstitions of science.

The immense shadow of man's egotism is mirrored in his vision of the world. He calls it "God," pursues the phantom as one pursues a fleeting mirage across a desert, falls spent at last and declares there is no God. He is quite right; there is no *such* God. Why this terrific anxiety to find one Huge Self? Is it not enough for the present that one's own soul contains ever new revelations of the possibilities of spiritual growth? Is it not enough that the eighteen hundred million other souls of his kind are marshalled around him for his inspiration and service? This thirst for communion with a Perfect Self instead of for the perfecting of the self is the old mad thirst for millions of those who do not spend their hundreds wisely, the dream of the child to have all playthings at once. No doubt the Universe hides in its bosom infinite riches of wisdom, power and skill beyond imagination. The point is they are diffused through it like crypton, neon and argon in the air, everywhere present, but nowhere visible in their entirety.

A painting hangs on my wall. The glow of the rising sun is breaking through a rent veil of black clouds. Captivated by the dawn, a huge bird, with outstretched wings and arched neck, is rising from the glassy surface of a vast expanse of water. Beneath him the distorted figure of his shadow is re-

flected from the rippling mirror. Were he a man, he might call the shadow "God," but being a bird, it is enough for him to live, to ascend, to rush through the abundant air to the growing light. The world is an extension of his life; he does not futilely separate it from himself and then seek its secret beyond it.

God is not found in his world; we shall not by waiting see Him descend from Heaven. This is but a dream of the indolent and weak, or the misguided strong. The God-idea is a real but bloodless form; the living God is simply so much of nature and life as we can grasp moment by moment and perceive the meaning of in relation to the Whole. The "substantial essence" of the Whole is ever hidden, as meaningless apart from the narrow shore of reality on which we stand as the latter is valueless when substituted for the whole.

### ON "SEEING GOD"

There are rare moments in life, in the presence of impending death, under the exaltation of a great love, the inspiration of a great mission, or in moments of creative genius, when we seem to traverse vast multitudes of facts in a moment. Our youth and our maturity flit across the stage with miraculous speed. The beginning and the end coalesce, and we feel we have grasped the big facts of life in their mutual significance. To exercise this power at all is to transcend our ordinary selves. To use it, not for the particular purposes of a poem, an invention, a business merger, but

to comprehend our feeble strivings as the expression of one Real Resolving Purpose is to "see God." And when this is done, clear eyed, sanely, without the use of base stimulants, of soporifics, of drugs, postures and breathings, or the invocation of demons or divinities, old or new, it is the highest insight of the human mind, the deepest of all religious attitudes, "the intellectual love of God."

There is no compulsion about truths of this sort. They are not obvious and axiomatic like brute rocks, or the multiplication table. A certain profound attention is necessary to attain them. One may believe that unity, law and order pervade the Universe, but they live as One Reality only for him who lingers with these thoughts till he forgets words in an intuitive grasp of truth as felt. Most of our thinking is done with words and is of words, but what little wordless thinking we do about realities is worth all the rest. There is no substitute for thought, and "All excellent things are as difficult as they are rare."

## RELIGION AND CONDUCT

Will the belief in the Supreme Mystery mould conduct? It does not provide us with rules that will infallibly determine the distinction between right and wrong acts. The Supreme Mystery has no Bible, no Pope. Its authoritative thou shalt not and thou shalt are not written in any sacred document, nor delivered through any uniquely inspired prophet. Yet to believe that one derives his existence from the Dispenser

of Destiny, not as a trivial chip from the flashing tool of the Sculptor but as a significant part of the supreme masterpiece surely invests the search for the right and the good with dignity and hope.

For what is lacking for the conduct of life is not chiefly rules of conduct; we all know far more and better than we practise. What is lacking is greatness of letting. Life is a game, or a jest, or a guess, only when we see it small. The moves seem trivial and played upon a small board, with only a stalemate for a result, but if the players and the moves really proceed out of a Mystery that is the competent adjuster of both good and evil, we shall not lack inspiration to right conduct.

Belief in the Mystery points to Destiny. The destination is yet to be discerned; it will perhaps be much as we make it, but the main thing is to believe that there is a destiny. "It is true that we shall never reach the goal; it is even more than probable that there is no such place," said Stevenson sadly, but the believer in the Supreme Mystery will not take so melancholy a view. Rather will he measure the meaning of life by the silence of its Author. The Greatest is sparing of words; He does not so much proclaim his purposes as achieve them. Whether the Mystery plans as we do does not signify; doubtless not, but who can believe that a God whom all names cannot name will cancel his own work at last? Shall the cosmos be turned into chaos and the workers and their work be buried in the ruins? A tribal god, a national god, any god made



in the image of man might do that. A Great Person might be guilty of it; it is the fashion of persons to annihilate themselves, but the Ultimate Substance will let nothing live in vain. No doubt it is an assumption that it will be friendly to the man of good will, but it is a good and necessary assumption. Nothing can be hoped from Chance; the odds are too great, and if Necessity rules, without love, we are concerned only to meet it stoically. But if reason and good will are comprised in a supreme unity we cannot do less than hope that the end of our strivings will be better than the beginning.

### THE MINIMUM OF RELIGION

For those who cannot attain the certainty of a Spinoza or the optimism of a Lodge the following thoughts of Justice Holmes, whom John Dewey calls "One of our greatest philosophers," may furnish a minimum foundation on which a religious life can rest:

"That the Universe has more in it than we can understand, that the private soldiers have not been told the plan of the campaign, or even that there is one—has no bearing on our conduct. We shall still fight—all of us, because we want to live; some, at least, because we want to realize our spontaneity and prove our powers for the joy of it, and we may leave to the unknown the supposed final valuation of that which in any event has value to us. It is enough for us that the Universe

has produced us and has within it, as less than it, all that we believe and love. If we think of our existence not as that of the little god outside but as that of a ganglion within, we have the Infinite behind us. It gives us our only but our adequate significance. If our imagination is strong enough to accept the vision of ourselves as parts inseparable from the rest, and to extend our final interests beyond the boundary of our skins, it justifies even the sacrifice of our lives for ends outside of ourselves. The motive, to be sure, is the common wants and ideals that we find in man. Philosophy does not furnish motives, but it shows men that they are not fools for doing what they already want to do. It opens to the forlorn hopes, on which they throw themselves away, the vista of the farthest stretch of human thought, the chord of a harmony that breathes from the unknown.

### THE GHOST OF "PERSONALITY"

Do we, perhaps, in worshipping the Supreme Mystery, unconsciously impute to it something of the flavor of our own self-conscious personality? All who believe in the metaphysical God have been reared under the spell of the anthropomorphic deity of their youth. The most "intellectual love of God" possible to man may shroud the ghost of a Great Spirit.

Logical Abstractions such as The Absolute, or The Infinite, are, perhaps, the empty echoes of an unfilled want. Many are able to see in them only the

pale verbal creations of a self trying to discover a Perfect Person in the Universe. At the last, as in the beginning, if we worship the Infinite, do we not worship a transfigured image of the selves that we are?

Under this view the fancied emancipation from the traditional God would be a delusion; cosmic emotion would be the adoration of a phrase, and mystic union with the One that is not the Many a self-deception. "Love" of the metaphysical God would be a hang-over from our idolatrous past. In vain should we have denied all that was human and living about the All-Father. For that spendid and comforting image we should have substituted surreptitiously an emasculated version of a tribal deity, an enlarged but non-human replica of our petty ego.

There is an element of truth in this doubt. We never quite escape the contamination of the crude images of childhood. Yet there is a vast difference between worshipping a god who is *only* a person and one that embraces personality in a nature that includes *all* the actualities of experience, plus all the unknown powers of the Infinite. A stone is a stone to both a dog and a scientist, but it is infinitely more to the scientist. No doubt the only personality of its sort in the Universe is ours alone. God is not absent from it, but it is a minute attribute of his being. We may claim our humble place in the Universe, but the day has passed when we measure the Whole by an infinitesimal part.

## THE GOD IN THE MAKING

There is an answer to the projection of our personality upon the sky, but it is the response of the whole Universe, than which God is not less. It is a far richer and grander response, once you see it so, than the imaginary hearkening of the Almighty Man to our petitions. Let us throw the guesses of our conscious selves as far ahead into the darkness as we please, but let us hope for something better in return than a pale, if mighty, shadow of ourselves. Back in the depths is our Source and our strength, but ahead, in the growth of our individual selves and of the race, is the vision of the greater personalities we may become.

This is the "deity" of Alexander, a late born quality of the human spirit, a "god in the making." Hovering over the individual spirits of the race may be a superior all-embracing consciousness, of which we all partake because we are in some sense the creators of it. Some such thought is behind that fine passage of Bergson:

"The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity, in space and time, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge, able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death."

Such conceptions involve the quality of deity; they are of God, but they are not the equivalent of God. Can

we think that the "new levels of existence" that appear as life rises out of the inorganic, consciousness supervenes on life, self-consciousness transcends consciousness, and the latter develops into "deity," should appear without a reason, ground or cause? And if not, whatever the background of those unfolding-existences is we shall call God.

Is there personality in it? Of course not. Is there, to speak in a figure, an answering voice to our cry for perfect companionship? To me there is a voice that becomes articulate somewhere along the line between the God-head and man. Some erect a finite God, a comforting guess, but only such. Innumerable mediators have been proposed from the Logos to Krishna-murti, false gods, no doubt, if taken to be real existences in time. But that somewhere, somehow, in the depths of the Universe, there is a knowledge that embraces my knowledge, a will in which my will roots, I do not doubt. The words are of the earth, metaphorical, but the assumption is the indispensable postulate of any religion that passes beyond the worship of Humanity.

It had to be that our ancestors framed rigid pictures of a personal God directly responsive to their needs. We carry the taint of ghosts, demons, gods and angels into our most refined worship, but we can always affirm the Reality to be greater and other than the symbols.

## THE DIVINE IN MAN

Really the response of personality is within us as the mysterious upwelling of the Nameless One we worship. It is none other than the Self, yet none other than God, but neither separated from the other. This is what Spinoza meant when he said, "The mental, intellectual love of God is the very love of God with which God loves himself, not in so far as he is infinite, but in so far as he can be expressed through the essence of the human mind considered under the species of eternity."

Wisdom in religion is the common sense to admit that human personality is nowhere cut off by an impenetrable partition from the Universal God. It is true the plant cannot worship the soil; it is above the dirt. And the diamond is superior to the volcanic clay which was its matrix. There is no Father of diamonds, and yet there is, though it be not a diamond. The intangible forces and laws that thrust the diamond into existence must conceal a Unity that envisaged the diamond before it existed for us.

Is there, then, after all a God that knows me and is concerned with my destiny? Yes, yourself, the only "knowable" God. As long as there are depths in us untapped, reservoirs of light and strength, fluent possibilities of improvement, we have within us the elements of the larger personality we would imagine at a stroke as God. Of what use is it to place that God outside of us? Men have never reached that ineffable One in his sacred seclusion. Within the God-lit light

of conscious reason is the working God who is our helper, our very self, a God sufficient for the next step. Within is the growing God; beyond is the Adorable Mystery.

## EPILOGUE

I have read hundreds of books on God and religion and at the end asked myself, "What does this writer think God and religion really are?" I will, therefore, make a final effort to be clear.

"God," meaning a person, is a completely worn out word for me. So is "religion," meaning a form of verbal worship. I have used both words frequently under compulsion; we have as yet no adequate substitute for them; what I mean by them is not less, but infinitely more, than the common meanings. So much more that in popular speech it would be unjust to call me an atheist and an irreligionist. What most call "God" are facts like energy, spirit, love, goodness, mind, glimpses of divine activity, but for me nothing is God but that which fills every known and unknown corner of the Universe.

The search for God is usually an attempt to find a Transcendent Being, a super-Individual. I find no such God, merely a symbol of such. Such a Being would be another Thing among things, "crib'd, cabin'd and confin'd" by the infinite horde of finite existences. For religion and poetry it is desirable at times to think and talk of God as a Being distinct from the rest of the Universe. But it is not so; there is no such Being. If

there were, we could not know it. God is distinct within, not without, the Universe.

Is God swallowed up in the weltering slough of things? No; no such Universe could exist; such a belief is rational suicide. The Unity of all things, the nameless mystery that colors all our thinking, is God. Does not God overflow the bounds of matter and thought? Certainly; of all we know of matter and thought and of all the matter and thoughts that we know, but not the bounds of the Universe. We speak as children when we ask whether God is wholly above the world, quite the same as the world, or partly within and partly without the world. This is mere space imagery; space is of God, but God is not spatial.

The truth is the mysterious union of all these assertions. Does not that involve contradictions? Certainly; God is the unity of contradictions. If there were ultimately insoluble contradictions in Reality, there would be no Universe. God is the One in Many that is nothing alone, yet is not the Many.

The unity of God with the world is not a unity of knowledge. Knowledge is of and about things; their inmost being, their why and how, knowledge never grasps; always an unexplained margin, wide as the Universe, stretches beyond it. God is universal experience, creature and Creator, space and time, matter and thought, united in perfect harmony. God is the Unity of the Many and the Multiplicity of the One. We can see that this must be so; we cannot understand



now. I leave the nature of God where it belongs, in impenetrable mystery.

“One absolute proportion is the Whole,  
One sole relation, whose correlatives  
Are at once the multitudinous Vast  
And Unity, finite and infinite,  
Matter and mind—the creature and its God.”

Nature and man I take at their face value. For me there is nothing *knowable* behind them that is more real or better than they, neither man-soul, nor world-soul. God and the Good shine fairest for me on the surface of things. Appearances are in part illusory; man and the world are not wholly what they seem, but they are appearances of the real. All the reality we *know* is revealed, not concealed by them. I look for no ghost of God dancing behind the sunbeams, or sheltered in an inaccessible Heaven. No man, past or present, is uniquely divine to me. Nature and all men are instinct with deity, but they are not all of God.

This is my religion, to live as well as man by his own natural powers may live. I learn to live by faltering experiments and the halting advice and example of my fellows. I learn the better and faster by not deceiving myself with the idea that conscience, visions, or miraculous interventions by a supernatural God, are substitutes for earned knowledge.

There is peace for me in these beliefs, “a peace that the world can neither give nor take away.” I read my errors and losses as perfect notes in the Ultimate Symphony. I do not play my little part alone; the

Universe, a symbol of God, is my Good Companion. It repairs in secret my failures; all of it is my home, the grave as much as the cradle, and at the end I shall not lie down feeling that I am alone, impoverished and forgotten; I hope to live again. My religion is assailed by no doubts, is unhampered by paralyzing traditions, demands nothing of me but what I freely impose on myself, and is my supremely worth while possession. I am not so "happy" as I was when a Christian, but I am better satisfied.

### GOD OR RELIGION?

A great thinker has said: "To my mind religion is much more important than God, who is the outgrowth, not the basis, of religion." No doubt my *idea* of God arose in me as the result of a religious striving and not as its cause, but God is the origin of religion. Religion flows from God, not God from religion. I can see how some men may have a great deal of religion without any belief in God. I can see how others might believe in God and have no religion. I would rather have religion without God than God without religion, but for me God is more important than religion.

Finally, I am certain that God *is*; what he *does* I know in part; *what* he is I know dimly, but surely, a knowledge infinitely little compared with its object, but infinitely valuable.

### "WHAT SHALL I DO?"

"Your book will not succeed unless you tell people

how your view of religion will make them happy," remarked a friend. To which I reply, happiness cannot be purchased by reading a book. What multitudes are seeking is a new creed, an occult superstition, an exotic cult, a spiritual panacea, to be swallowed without mental or moral effort, "happiness in ten lessons, or your money back." They ask, "Give us something to take the place of the old religion, something that will make us as happy, yet not offend our intelligence." It may be that happiness of the ecstatic brand and intelligence of the new order are not compatible. It may also be that intellectual sincerity and moral simplicity are better than happiness.

"Now I believe in God; what shall I *do*?" asked one whom the reading of a chapter of this book converted from atheism. I answered, in substance, "I do not offer a new 'religion.' I say life may be made religious all the way through without practicing 'religion.' Go on living; stop worrying; discover the next duty or the most desirable satisfaction as best you can. What more can you need than the assurance that 'God's in his Heaven and all's well with the world?' Substitute working for praying, hope for dogmas. Let Nature be your cathedral and the song of birds your hymns. If you crave sympathy and affection, you will get from humanity as much as you give, and if you should not, remember 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

"Then you would do away with the churches altogether?"

"I would ask no man to give up his religion who did not find in mine a better way to God."

"But you really think the churches are superfluous, 'God' a fiction, and prayer an empty soliloquy; you are anti-religious."

"I am religious; humanity is my church; the divine Universe is my God; I do not pray for what I lack; I try to earn it. This is my religion."

### SHALL WE LIVE AGAIN?

The answer of science is negative, and philosophy is silent. We know life from its activities; when a man dies all evidence of his continued existence vanishes. But this is no "proof" of mortality. We should need to explore the utmost bounds of the Universe before we could assert positively that death ends all. Neither science nor philosophy can do that. We began life once; surely it is within the capacities of the Universe that bore us to revive us after death. It is possible, that is conceivable, that we shall live again.

An old argument for immortality runs, Everything created has a purpose and a function. A man's physical existence is a mere incident; he seems fitted to explore the realms of knowledge forever; he has ever-expanding vistas of spiritual perfections. God swindles him, if He disappoints these hopes. Man is the summit of creation; the earth labored to produce him, but he is not finished; life looks like a beginning; death cannot end it.

All of this is very appealing to those who think the Universe revolves about their private desires and interests. If we believe God is a loving Father, it should be convincing. No decent father would torture his children with the sorrows of life, tantalize them with the hope of Heaven, and then obliterate them in the grave. He would make good the hopes he had created. This argument has made millions believe in immortality, but there is no assurance that a God who twists our heart strings in life may not ignore our dying hopes. From the human point of view we ought not to suffer *at all*, but we *do*, and the disappointment of extinction at death would be on a par with the rest of life, for many at least.

Consequently, many who substitute the Absolute Mystery for the God of the Bible do not believe in immortality. The "social theologians" and the materialistic atheists expect to stay dead. Undoubtedly faith in immortality is diminishing among scientists and philosophers.

There are all sorts of difficulties about *imagining* how we could live again. Which body will rise from the grave—that of infancy, of manhood, or the emaciated fragment that was thrust into the ground or the furnace? And if a new celestial body be assumed, will the distracted spirit of mortal that took so much of the color of its personality from its earthly body remember itself? We cannot remember how.

Even in this life we forget self after self. We lose interest in the bawling infant, the awkward youth, the

erring adult we once were. At any moment when we wish for immortality it is a wish that the ME of the present moment continue after death. But *this* ME will not last even a day; he is gone while he arrives. At the longest our interest in him soon fades. If the person we are at the verge of the grave perishes forever, that person will have nothing to mourn, so why should *we* mourn now? If he lives on forgetful of *this* ME, what of it? He will not mourn; neither shall *we*. And so on, difficulty after difficulty.

Strangely enough, men can realize the difficulties of faith in immortality and yet believe in it. With me it is a hope that amounts to expectation. I cherish the hope because it survives in spite of doubts. I can explain its survival as the result of the habit of living. I have awakened from unconsciousness thousands of times. I cannot *imagine* my non-existence. Life is a habit and the expectation of it beyond the grave the ideal projection of the habit. Quite possibly that is all, but I do not believe it; I expect to go on after death. Better philosophers than I, and as sceptical, admit that man may be immortal. I take the long end of the bet. The Universe is too rich in undiscovered possibilities for me to reject the possibility of immortality. It may be only a dream; it is unproved, but it is not irrational; the door is open for hope.

I do not feel that it is a question of supreme importance, or one that bears vitally on life and duty, or even happiness. Not for me. I accept the Universe; it knows its business, and whatever is to be will be

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and will be right; I am satisfied to wait and hope. This is a rather pleasant world. In spite of terrific losses and errors I have lived long and on the whole gladly. I am willing to believe I may have the undemonstrable and undeserved destiny to live again in a better world. This thin ray of hope that I shall go on building after death helps me. I would live well without that hope, but not so well, be serene, but not happy, die resignedly, but not triumphantly. With that hope no future life that I can imagine can be better than the one I hopefully await.









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